

HOW TO: one great pizza dough, for calzones & stromboli, too

TAUNTON'S

fine Cooking

MAY 2008 NO. 92

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO COOK

welcome spring

with fresh recipes, techniques & ideas

**quick chicken
for a week**

**peas from the
pod in salads
& sides**

**sear-roasting
perfect fish**

**taming garlic,
4 easy recipes**

**spring menu:
asparagus soup
rack of lamb
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- ◆ QUICK
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ MAKE AHEAD
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ VEGETARIAN
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients



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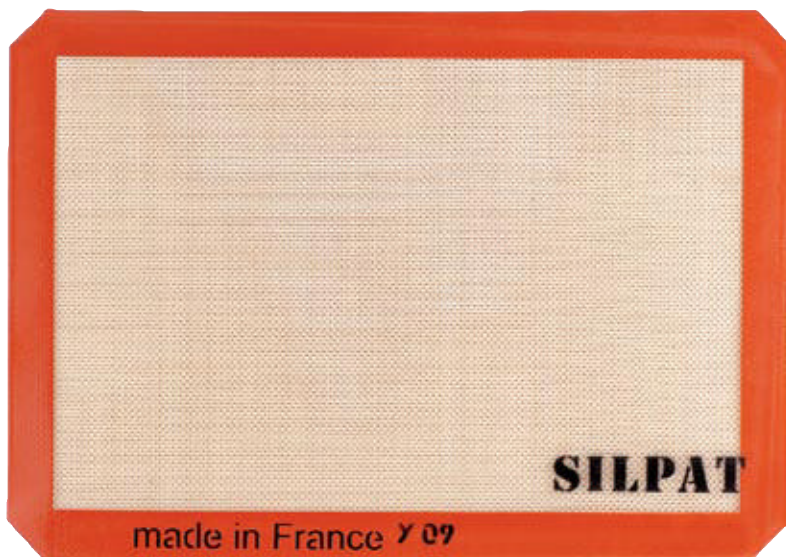
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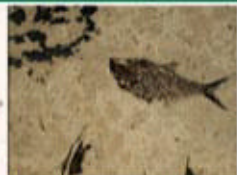


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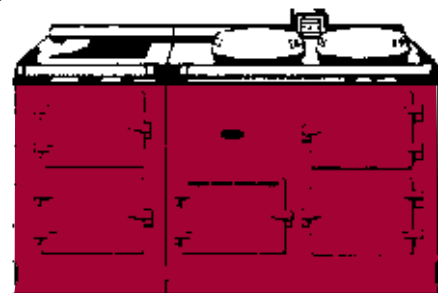


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A Fresh Start

What better time than spring to start fresh and try something new? It's in this spirit that we packed this issue with lots of techniques and delicious recipes that celebrate the best the season has to offer. We've got fresh peas and lamb, of course, but also many creative ideas for cooking garlic, fish, and quick chicken

dinners. We even have an elegant spring menu (p. 40) that can easily double as an Easter meal. So whether you're looking to entertain in style or stay low-key, we have what you need. And don't forget to adjust the yield on your recipes, as you may have to double or halve them depending on the number of people you're serving.

Entertaining, restaurant-style

Want to impress friends with restaurant-style dishes that take half the time to make? This menu is guaranteed to wow—and you don't have to spend the entire day in the kitchen. To save even more time, make the soup and the angel food cake a day ahead. Serve the salmon with couscous spiked with a little lemon and sweet paprika.

Pea & Mint Soup with Lemon Cream, p. 54

Spice-Rubbed & Sear-Roasted Salmon with Honey-Glazed Fennel, p. 49

Angel Food Cake with Strawberries & Whipped Cream, p. 45

To drink: A fruity dry Riesling like the 2006 August Kessler "R," Rheingau, \$14

Pizza Night

Next Saturday invite a couple of friends over for pizza. No take out, though—this time it's homemade pizza. The good news is that you can make the dough and the tomato sauce several days ahead, so you still have time to run errands during the day and entertain at night. For four to six people, make four pizzas and round things out with a fresh salad. Finish the meal with store-bought vanilla ice cream topped with warm espresso and a dollop of whipped cream.

Classic Margherita Pizza, p. 69

Better Than Pepperoni Pizza, p. 69

Pea, Butter Lettuce & Herb Salad, p. 52

To drink: A youthful fruity Barbera like the 2006 Paolo Scavino, Piedmont, \$18

Chicken for lunch

Everyone knows chicken is quick to cook, but that doesn't mean it has to be boring. So spice things up for a lunch that's as easy to make as it is delicious to eat. We've got two ideas for you.

Sautéed Chicken Paillards with Herb Salad & White Balsamic Vinaigrette, p. 90a

To drink: A Loire Valley Sauvignon Blanc like the 2006 Pascal Jolivet Sancerre, \$18

Village-Style Greek Salad with Chicken & Lemon-Mint Vinaigrette, p. 90a

To drink: A young, crisp Spanish white like the 2006 Burgans Albarino, Rias Baixas, \$12

Three casual spring dinners

These quick dinners are perfect for Friday night entertaining, when you don't have the whole day to spend in the kitchen. To end the meal, serve a plate of assorted cheeses and fresh fruit.

Sautéed Chicken with Sherry & Olive Pan Sauce & Toasted Almonds, p. 90a

Creamy Garlic Mashed Potatoes, p. 60

To drink: A crisp, dry rosé like the 2007 Mulderbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé, Stellenbosch, South Africa, \$10

Sear-Roasted Cod with Horseradish Aioli & Lemon-Zest Breadcrumbs, p. 48

Quick-Braised Peas, Lettuce & Scallions, p. 51

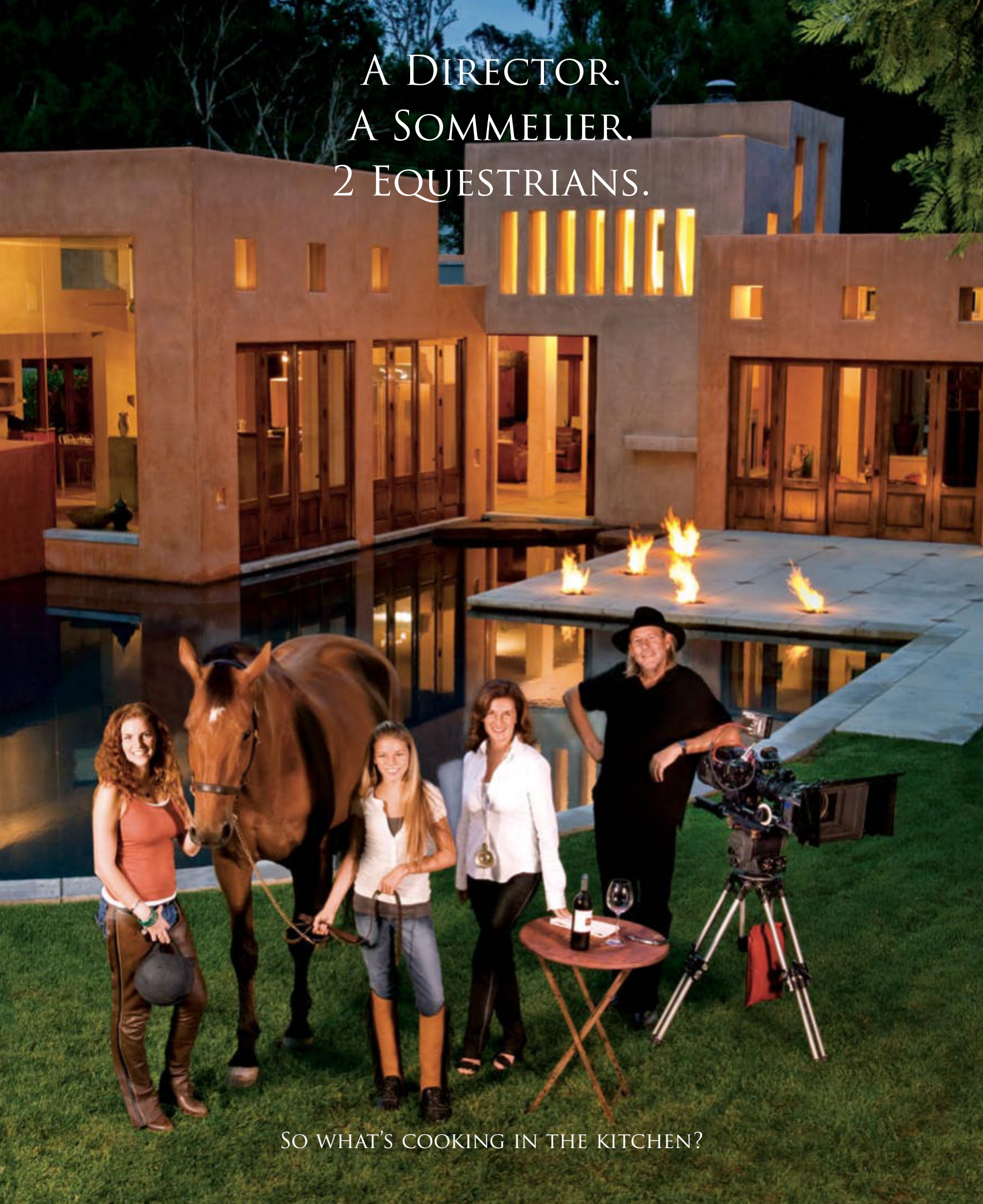
To drink: A citrusy Pinot Grigio like the 2006 Ermacora Pinot Grigio, Colli Orientali del Friuli, Italy, \$16

Pea & Shrimp Penne with Basil, p. 55

Mixed Green Salad with Red-Wine & Dijon Vinaigrette, from *FineCooking.com*

To drink: A vibrant herbal Sauvignon Blanc like the 2007 Dog Point Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand, \$18

A DIRECTOR.
A SOMMELIER.
2 EQUESTRIANS.



SO WHAT'S COOKING IN THE KITCHEN?

And action! Cast: David Cornell, director/husband; Mea Argentieri, sommelier/wife; Clancey and Ella Cornell, equestrians/daughters.

Wide shot reveals cast preparing a meal in their California kitchen.

Feature: double convection ovens, professional cooktop with dual-stacked burners and 42" ENERGY STAR qualified refrigerator with Express Thaw and Chill compartment.

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from the editor

Shades of Green

Every issue of the magazine has its own personality. Sometimes, though, the little quirks don't reveal themselves until the entire magazine is laid out on a wall and we step back and look at it together—as a complete issue—for the first time. And then we'll often notice something funny. This time it was the color green. It was everywhere—in headlines, sidebars, and of course, photos.

I think all that green snuck in because we wanted to amp up the fresh factor for this year's April/May issue. That's why we have lots of "green" stories like "Peas from the Pod," "Fresh Favas," and "A Cure for Spring Fever," our menu, on p. 40, which includes a silky asparagus soup. Of course, we have some great "evergreen" stories, too. Once you try Peter Reinhart's delicious and versatile pizza dough (it makes calzones and stromboli, too; see p. 66), you'll never go back to take-out. And Adam Ried's quick and delicious chicken recipes (see the foldout, p. 90a) will definitely knock a few stand-bys out of your repertoire.

But I think there may also be a subliminal message behind all the green in this issue. After all, green means go, it beckons us to start fresh, it wishes us good luck, and it signals a transition and a time of growth. That's why it's an appropriate color for my last issue as editor of *Fine Cooking*. I'll still be contributing to the magazine in many ways, but after 11 years, I'm treating myself to a return to a full-time writing and cooking career.

I started at *Fine Cooking* as an associate editor in 1996, became managing editor in 2000, executive editor in 2001, and editor in 2003. It's been a dream job. For a girl who's just as crazy about cooking as she is about magazine making, it doesn't get any better than working on a magazine as inspiring and useful as *Fine Cooking*.

But like any really fun, creative job, this one has probably been as much about the people who do the creating as it is about the product they create. In other words, the *Fine Cooking* team rocks. They're a very special group of cooks, editors, word-smiths, designers—and friends. Which is why I can get up from my desk now and turn off my computer. I know I'm leaving you, our readers—the reason we do what we do—in excellent hands.

—Susie Middleton, editor



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from our readers

Kudos for the new Web site

I wanted to thank you for putting all of your recipes online. I travel a lot between our boat and our home and have been schlepping your magazines back and forth for years—no more! We entertain quite a bit both places, but more so on the boat, where I am often without the Internet. So I love that I can peruse your recipes and grab the ones I want for later.

I am a retired web designer and really appreciate not only the wealth of information that you have put online but also the great organization and lovely design. It's easy to use and easy on the eye.

I love your magazine (nothing beats turning a paper page), but I love it even more now that I can also get to it electronically.

—Nyna Armstrong, via email

Brining basics

I love *Fine Cooking*. From every issue I get so much information about products, not to mention the recipes. I am particularly interested in the Food Science article on salt in the February/March 2008 issue (*Fine Cooking* #91). I have never brined meat and noticed that the author didn't give any proportions of salt to water for the brining. Can you help?

—Judi Cingcade, via email

Editors' reply: Our rule of thumb for brines is 1 cup kosher salt for every gallon of water. You'll need to make enough brine to submerge the meat, and the salt should be dissolved in the water, either by heating or stirring. You can also flavor your brine with any herbs or spices you like and add a little sweetener, such as sugar, honey, or maple syrup (about ¼ cup per gallon). It won't actually make the meat sweet, but it will balance the salt and enhance the overall flavor. The larger the cut of meat, the longer you can brine it. For example, you can brine a whole turkey for a day, but pork chops or chicken pieces need only three or four hours.

Extra kick for meatloaf

I enjoyed the meatloaf recipes in the February/March 2008 issue (*Fine Cooking* #91). May I suggest that readers substitute one or more sausages for some of the pork

called for in the recipes? Hot Italian and sweet Italian sausages, casings removed, typically weigh about ¼ lb. each. The spiciness adds extra kick and flavor to a favorite meatloaf recipe.

—Michael McPhillips,
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Wine and chocolate

I read Tim Gaiser's Enjoying Wine column on pairing wine with chocolate with much interest (*Fine Cooking* #91). Since my American wife and I have been living in Belgium for almost eight years now, this is a topic of much relevance to our group of friends, who share the Belgians' love of dark bittersweet chocolate and my French passion for wine.

I agree with Tim's recommendation of vintage port with bittersweet chocolate, but in my opinion (based on countless tastings), the absolute best combo with dark chocolate is one of the French red *vins doux naturels* (fortified wines) from the Roussillon (Maury and Banyuls) or the Rhône (Rasteau). My favorite is Maury, a dark ruby-red wine made almost exclusively of Grenache. These wines may be difficult to find in the United States, but for the true wine lover who enjoys chocolate (and vice versa), it's worth the effort to find a merchant who carries them.

—François Meurgey, Brussels, Belgium

Renewed hope for French bread

My husband bought me a new dual-fuel range with two convection ovens and a professional hood. I love my new range but am having trouble baking bread. My French bread doesn't brown as well as it should, and the crust isn't crusty. In my old stove, my bread was absolutely fantastic—brown crusty crust with a dense chewy interior.

So I was happy to see "Make French Bread at Home" in the February/March 2008 issue (*Fine Cooking* #91). I plan to bake French bread again this weekend using the higher temperature settings, as your article suggests. I hope to achieve my very much missed brown, crusty French bread.

—Edna Cunningham,
Greer, South Carolina ♦

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Fine Cooking: (ISSN: 1072-5121) is published six times a year by The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Telephone 203-426-8171. Periodicals postage paid at Newtown, CT 06470 and at additional mailing offices. GST paid registration #123210981.

Subscription Rates: U.S. and Canada, \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years, \$69.95 for three years (GST included, payable in U.S. funds). Outside the U.S./Canada: \$36 for one year, \$62 for two years, \$88 for three years (payable in U.S. funds). Single copy, \$6.95. Single copy outside the U.S., \$7.95.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Fine Cooking*, The Taunton Press, Inc., 63 South Main St., P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

Canada Post: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *Fine Cooking*, c/o Worldwide Mailers, Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7, or email to mnfa@taunton.com.

Printed in the USA.

HOW TO CONTACT US:

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www.finecooking.com

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Barbara Lynch ("Spring Menu," p. 40) opened her own restaurant, No. 9 Park, in historic Beacon Hill in 1998. Since then, she has expanded her presence in Boston with restaurants (B&G Oysters and The Butcher Shop), a catering company (No. 9 at Home), a small, selective produce store (Plum), and a demonstration kitchen/cook's library (Stir). In 2003, The James Beard Foundation named Barbara Best Chef Northeast. She's currently working on her first cookbook and plans to open three new restaurants in the Fort Point area of Boston.



Barbara Lynch

House building and railroad-car repair were among **Tom Douglas's** ("Sear-Roasted Fish," p. 46) jobs before he found his calling, transforming the seafood and produce of the Pacific Northwest into culinary delights. He and his wife, Jackie Cross, own five restaurants in Seattle—Dahlia Lounge, Etta's, Palace Kitchen, Lola, and Serious Pie, a pizzeria. He and **Shelley Lance** have written three cookbooks, including *I Love Crab Cakes!*



Tom Douglas

Annie Wayte ("Peas," p. 50) began her culinary career in London, eventually becoming the chef at fashion designer Nicole Farhi's restaurant, Nicole's. The restaurant was replicated in 1999 in New York and housed in Farhi's flagship store. In 2002, Annie opened Farhi's third dining venture, the Notting Hill Café 202, which she brought to New York in 2005 as simply 202. Annie's cooking style, which blends English, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern cuisines, emphasizes seasonality and high-quality ingredients.



Annie Wayte

After setting aside a college degree in history and deciding that law school was not for him, **Steve Connaughton** ("Spaghetti alla Carbonara," p. 56)

realized that cooking was his true vocation. He began his career at the Tabard Inn and at Pesce Bistro in his hometown of Washington, DC, and then moved to New York and worked his way up from sous chef to executive chef at Lupa. He's planning to open a new restaurant this spring specializing in northern Italian food.

Jennifer McLagan ("Garlic," p. 58), a self-professed garlic lover, never has fewer than two heads of garlic in her kitchen. Her garlic recipes in this issue highlight the allium's dual personality as both a powerful flavoring agent and a mellow muse. Originally from Australia, Jennifer has more than 30 years of experience as a chef, food stylist, and writer. Her new book, coming out in the fall, is entitled *Fat: An Appreciation of a Misunderstood Ingredient, with Recipes*.

Cindy Mushet loves baklava (p. 63) because it's such an unexpected dessert. "Most people think I'll bring a towering chocolate cake or chewy caramel tart to a party, but never baklava," she says, "which is exactly why I bring it." A pastry chef for nearly twenty years, Cindy is also a baking teacher and food writer. Her latest book, *The Art and Soul of Baking*, will be available late this summer.

Peter Reinhart ("Pizza Dough," p. 66) has long been a devotee of pizza, calzones, and stromboli. His epic quest throughout Italy and the United States to uncover the best techniques and recipes is chronicled in *American Pie: My Search for the Perfect Pizza*. Through baking, writing, and teaching, Peter has devoted himself to discovering and sharing the secrets behind the great breads of the world. His most recent cookbook is *Peter Reinhart's Whole Grain Breads*. ♦



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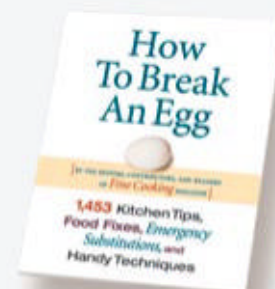
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Linda Stephen is a culinary instructor in Cobourg, Ontario, and the author of *The Convection Oven Bible*, as well as four other cookbooks.

Cooking with Convection

Faster and more efficient, convection ovens deliver impressive results—once you make a few adjustments. Linda Stephen tells you how.

What is the difference between convection and true convection? Is one better than the other?

—Carol McKenzie, New York, New York

A conventional radiant oven has two heating elements—a bake element in the bottom and a broil element in the top. A convection oven adds a fan to move air continuously throughout the oven cavity. The air blowing on the food helps it cook more quickly, evenly, and efficiently than it would in a conventional oven. Even better results come from a true-convection oven, which has a third heating element along with the fan, so it blows heated air. With true convection, also referred to as European convection and third-element convection, oven temperature is more uniform than it is with regular convection.

In future issues we'll tackle eating local, candy making, and induction cooking. Send your questions on these topics to Ask the Expert, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fcqa@taunton.com.

When cooking in a convection oven, do I need to make any changes in the type or shape of the cooking vessel? I've heard you do not need to use a rack when roasting meat in convection.

—Joanne Bryant, Coronado, California

When cooking in a convection oven, any barrier that prevents the heated circulating air from hitting the food slows down and defeats the purpose of convection cooking, so the less interference the circulating air has, the better. When baking cookies in a convection oven, use shiny rimless baking sheets to allow for

even air circulation around the cookies. Baking time may need to be increased when using insulated baking sheets and pans. When roasting foods that require some containment, such as vegetables or fish, use baking sheets with shallow sides to encourage air circulation and browning. As for roasting meats, I've found that using a rack set over a broiler pan gives the best results, as it holds the food slightly above the sides of the pan, allowing air to circulate over, under, and around the food, resulting in even browning.

What are your general guidelines for converting conventional oven recipes for use in a convection oven?

—Sharon Richardson, Southern Pines, North Carolina

For roasting large cuts of meat, I reduce the temperature by 25°F and expect the food to be done slightly faster. For vegetables, fish, and small steaks, I maintain the same temperature as called for in the recipe and reduce the cooking time by about 25%. For baking, I reduce the oven temperature by 25°F and expect items to be done sooner. The longer you cook something, the greater the time savings with convection; a turkey could be done an hour faster, while cookies may be done only a minute

Tips

- ❖ To get comfortable with using a convection oven, cook one of your favorite dishes and record the changes in temperature and time. The more you use a convection oven, the better you will know how it cooks.
- ❖ Always test for doneness a few minutes before the minimum time suggested until you get comfortable with cooking the convection way.
- ❖ When shopping for a convection oven, a major consideration should be the availability of repair service, if necessary. It's great to have the latest and greatest stove, but if it cannot be serviced easily (either by the company or its contract people), it can be a nightmare and very expensive.

or two sooner. But with smaller baked goods, the time savings comes in being able to bake on up to three racks at one time (true-convection ovens don't have hot and cool spots, as conventional ovens do, so you generally don't have to rotate pans during baking). ♦

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Matzo-Ball Soup

A Traditional Passover, starring classic matzo-ball soup, oven-braised brisket with warm Mediterranean flavors, and a rich flourless chocolate torte.

An Easter Buffet for a Crowd, including marmalade-glazed ham, flaky cheese biscuits, and bite-size ginger cupcakes.



Mâche with
Spicy Melon &
Pink-Pepper-
corn Dressing

Mother's Day Lunch. Treat her to curried chicken crêpes, mâche salad with melon, and silky lemon pudding.



How to shape and roll stromboli.

How-to videos

- ❖ Watch baking instructor Peter Reinhart shape the pizza, calzone, and stromboli dough he writes about in this issue.
- ❖ Learn how to prep a rack of lamb for Easter or any special spring dinner.

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Mini Dishes, Many Talents

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

Available in a range of styles, shapes, and sizes, ramekins have lots of practical uses. Try them for baking and presenting individual pastas, molten cakes, or soufflés, or put them to work as prep bowls, for salt storage, or as serving vessels for nuts, olives, or ice cream.



Matching baskets for serving protect your guests (and the table) from the dishes' heat. Set of four 11-ounce "petite ramekins" with baskets, \$13.95 at Surlatable.com (800-243-0852).



For offbeat style, look to these "crumpled cups." They're perfect for hot drinks, but they're oven safe, too, so go ahead and bake bread pudding in them. *Revol 6 1/4-ounce Crumpled Cappuccino Tumblers*, from \$9.39 at Cheftools.com (866-716-2433).



Handmade in Italy and glazed in warm hues, these ramekins have a rustic, earthy charm. Set of four Vietri 6-ounce *Nature's Glory* ramekins, \$84 at Plumpuddingkitchen.com (888-940-7586).

We recently spied a set like this in a little French bistro, each ramekin holding a different flavor of crème brûlée. *Pillivuyt 4-ounce Quartet ramekins*, \$7.50 each, and 15x5 1/2-inch rectangular platter, \$36 (ramekins and platter sold separately) at 125west.com (888-921-9378).



Clean and modern, these all-purpose ramekins would make a great gift for a new cook. *BIA Cordon Bleu* 6-ounce *Oslo* ramekins, \$2.99 each at *Chef's Warehouse* (650-553-4155).



Splashes of pastel blue, green, pink, and lavender make these whimsical hearts a great choice for spring entertaining. Set of four *Le Creuset* 8-ounce heart ramekins, \$39.99 at *Amazon.com*.



We love the dainty pattern on these Portuguese-made ramekins; they come in several other pretty colors, including an understated green and a buttery yellow. *Juliska* 8-ounce *Berry and Thread* ramekins, \$11 each at *Juliska.com* (888-414-8448).

With graceful lines and a wide, scalloped edge, these ramekins remind us of open flowers. *Casafina* 6-ounce *Meridian* ramekins, \$7.95 each at *Yvonne-estelles.com* (847-518-1232).



The true classic:

In white, these ramekins are traditional in style, but they also come in a range of bright colors. 6-ounce *Emile Henry* ramekins, \$6.95 each at *Cooking.com* (800-663-8810). ♦

Fresh Favas

A fleeting spring treat worth seeking out

BY RUTH LIVELY

Let's be up front about it: Favas are a bit of work. But their rich and complex flavor is so delicious, they're worth the effort it takes to shuck the floppy pods and then peel each bean.

Favas are nutty and slightly sweet, with just a hint of bitterness and a discernible and intriguing taste of cheese. Cooked until tender, they turn buttery and can be added to soups, salads, or pastas, braised as a side dish, puréed for a dip, or eaten plain out of hand as a delightful snack.

Technically, the fava isn't a bean at all; it's more closely related to peas. But this vegetable has been called a bean for hundreds of years, and the appellation continues to stick. Fresh favas are a spring favorite in England (where they're called broad beans), and both fresh and dried favas are eaten throughout the Middle East. In North America, fresh favas are considered a specialty vegetable and can be hard to find, but they are well worth seeking out. Small to medium fava beans are more tender and sweeter than large beans, which are starchier.

Showcase favas' flavor simply

Peeled favas (see directions at right) need to be cooked just until tender, anywhere from several to about 12 minutes, depending on size and freshness. Most fava recipes call for braising, starting by warming the favas in a little oil or butter and then adding liquid and cooking until tender. For soups, add peeled favas during the last quarter hour of cooking, so there's time for them to get tender and for the flavors to meld. Or you can boil peeled favas in salted water until tender and store them in the refrigerator (for up to a week) to use cold in salads or to add to risottos and pastas near the end of cooking. In the sidebar at bottom right I've included some ways to use favas when you don't have a lot. If you find yourself with 3 pounds or more in the shell, though, make the versatile and delicious Fava Bean Purée or try one of the suggestions in the sidebar at far right.

Favas' flavor is enhanced by onions, garlic, and their kin and by cured pork, olive oil, butter, cream, and cheeses. Good herb companions include rosemary, thyme, savory, chives, dill, and mint. Classic vegetable partners are those that are in season at the same time—artichokes, asparagus, peas, beets, new potatoes, spring onions, and fennel. Lemon and vinegar add zip.

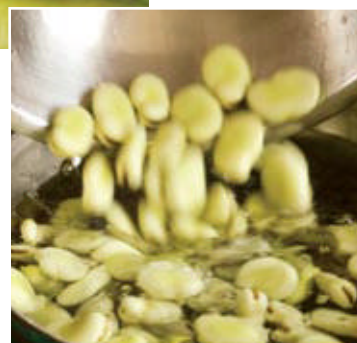
Getting to the heart of the matter

Favas grow inside bright green, fleshy pods that have a thick, white, cottony lining. Each flat fava is encased in a pale, fairly thick skin, which becomes thicker and bitter as the favas grow larger. It's this double shelling that gives favas the reputation of being labor-intensive.



To shell favas, break open the pods. Sometimes you can slide your finger along one side, opening the seam as you would a zipper, but other times you just have to break the pod apart in pieces.

Blanch the favas in boiling water for one minute, drain, and cool under running water.



Favas have one slightly flattened, slightly wider end with a scar where it was attached to the shell. Grasp the fava between your fingers with the scar facing up, and with the thumbnail of your other hand, tear into the scar end and peel back. Pinch gently and the fava will slide right out.



Fava Bean Purée

Yields about 1½ cups.

This purée is terrific on crostini, but you can also use it as a dip for vegetables, pita chips, or bread. Like other starchy purées, this will stiffen a bit after it sits, so if using as a dip, you may want to add a little extra olive oil or lemon juice, or just a spoonful of water to loosen it. The purée will keep in the fridge for up to 3 days.

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for drizzling
2 large cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary or thyme
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 lb. fava beans, shelled and peeled (see directions at left), to yield 2 cups
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste

Put a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add ¼ cup of the oil, the garlic, rosemary or thyme, ½ tsp. salt, and

⅛ tsp. pepper and cook until you begin to hear a sizzling sound and the aromatics are fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the fava beans. Stir until the beans are well coated with the oil and aromatics and then add 1 cup of water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and cook until the water has nearly evaporated and the fava beans are tender, about 12 minutes. Add more water if the pan looks dry before the favas are done. Remove from the heat.

Transfer the fava mixture to a food processor. Add the remaining ¼ cup olive oil and the lemon juice and purée until smooth, stopping to scrape the bowl as needed. Season to taste with more salt and lemon juice. Drizzle with a little olive oil before serving.

tip: 3 pounds of favas in the pod equals about 2 cups of shelled and peeled favas.

If you have lots of favas...

Make a classic Roman-style braise.

Sauté pancetta (or bacon), garlic, and chopped herbs (rosemary, savory, or thyme) in olive oil, add the favas and stir, then add water (deglaze with a little white wine before adding the water if you like); cover and simmer just until tender.

Toss together a savory bean salad.

Boil favas, drain, and turn into a bowl. Toss gently with best-quality olive oil, sea salt, and grated lemon zest (use Meyer lemon if you have one) and let cool. Stir in chopped tender herbs like dill, chives, or chervil and serve at room temperature. If you don't have quite enough favas, extend the dish with cooked chickpeas.

Arrange an antipasto platter of boiled favas drizzled with a little olive oil, thin slices of salami or cured ham, interesting olives, some good cheese (Parmigiano-Reggiano or a first-rate sheep's milk cheese), pieces of preserved lemon, and slices of crusty, chewy bread.

Create a cold side salad by tossing boiled favas with a sprightly dressing of plain Greek-style yogurt thinned with a little lemon juice and mixed with thinly sliced scallions and lots of chopped chives or dill.

If you have a handful of favas...

Make a classic seasonal mixed vegetable braise with artichokes, onions, plenty of garlic (use new "green" garlic if you can), baby carrots, and peas or fennel. Use a combination of white wine and water or broth for the braising liquid and finish with chopped herbs.

Put together a pretty salad plate. Pile boiled and peeled favas and tiny beets on a bed of endive, mâche, and beet

greens dressed in red-wine vinaigrette. Add some toasted bread and a good goat cheese.

Braise a flavorful primavera sauce for pasta using favas, asparagus, onion, garlic, mushrooms, a little cream, and lemon zest. Or skip the cream and use shrimp, bacon or pancetta, and a little hot pepper.

Compose an elegant seafood salad.

Start with a base of hearts of butter lettuce tossed in a lemon-shallot vinaigrette. Add thick slices of avocado, lumps of lobster or crab or shrimp, boiled favas, new potatoes, and a couple of baby beets or turnips. Spoon a bit more vinaigrette over the additions and serve with homemade saffron-scented aioli for dipping.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

Everything you need to know about Decanting

Learn why, when, and how to decant wine properly

BY TIM GAISER



I can't think of a more misunderstood aspect of enjoying wine than decanting. Why anyone would bother pouring a bottle of wine into a glass carafe before drinking it leaves many scratching their heads. And while some wine drinkers may be able to tell you that decanting aerates the wine, they may not be able to tell you why this is a good idea. I suspect some people even use decanters simply because they provide a more elegant vessel for serving wine. But decanters are much more than pretty centerpieces for a dinner party. In many instances, decanting is the most practical and easy way to enhance the enjoyment of a bottle of wine—as long as you know how to do it properly.

That's why I've put together this crash course on decanting, along with a few recommendations for buying the right decanter.

Why decanting is important

The question I get asked most often is: Why should I decant wine? There are at least three good reasons.

Decanting removes sediment from older red wines. Practically every red wine will start to develop sediment—the fine, silty, grainy particles at the bottom of the bottle—once it reaches seven or so years of age. The sediment is formed when pigment and tannin particles (both derived from grape skins) separate from the liquid as the wine ages. It's best to remove this sediment from the wine before drinking, not only because of its unpleasant grittiness but also because it can make the wine taste bitter and astringent. Decanting is the best way to get rid of the sediment.

Decanting helps aerate younger red (and some white) wines. Many red wines available in restaurants or wine stores are only one to three

years old, and their strong tannins can make them taste harsh. Decanting a young tannic Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot lets oxygen into the wine, rendering it more subtle and complex while softening its tannins.

Decanters can also bring up the temperature of any wine. If the bottle you're planning to drink with dinner is too cold because it came right out of the refrigerator or a cold cellar or wine cabinet, simply rinse the outside (not the inside) of a decanter with warm water until it feels warm to the touch (15 to 20 seconds should do it) and then pour the wine into the decanter. The temperature of the wine will quickly rise by a few degrees, and it will be ready to drink.

Knowing when and how long to decant wines

Although there are no hard-and-fast rules for when to decant a wine, in general, the more tannic the wine, the more time it needs to rest in the decanter. Old, robust, tannic reds, such as Barolo or Hermitage, should be decanted at least an hour before serving, allowing enough time for the wine to open up and lose some of its tannic harshness. Any young red wine should be decanted at least 30 minutes to an hour before the meal. Once you've decanted the wine, plan to finish it with the meal or within 24 hours. Rarely will any wine benefit from being in a decanter for longer than a day.

Burgundies and Pinot Noirs, especially older ones, don't have a lot of tannins and really should not be decanted. These fragile wines oxidize quickly when they come in contact with air and become unpleasantly acidic within just 30 minutes of opening the bottle. If you decide to decant these wines, do so right before serving.

Simple decanting instructions

For old red wines (seven years or more)

You'll need a decanter, a lit candle, and a clean cotton cloth. The main goal is to remove the sediment before letting the wine aerate.

1. Stand the unopened bottle upright for at least 12 hours before decanting to allow the sediment to drop to the bottom.
2. Remove the cork as gently as possible so as not to disturb the sediment.
3. Wipe the top and inside neck of the bottle with the cloth to remove any dust or mold that may have developed during the aging process.
4. Pour the wine slowly and gently into the decanter while holding the shoulder of



the bottle over the candle. As you pour the wine, use the candle to watch the shoulder (not the neck) for signs of sediment. If you're watching the neck of the bottle for sediment you could be too late, and sediment will get into the decanter. Stop decanting once you see sediment reach the shoulder of the bottle.

It's important to decant the wine in one slow, continuous pour. If you stop pouring before you're completely finished, you'll mix the sediment into the wine and defeat the purpose of decanting.

For young wines

You'll need a decanter and a clean cotton cloth. The main purpose here is to aerate the wine.

1. Remove the cork and wipe the neck and lip of the bottle with the cloth.
2. Pour the bottle vigorously into the decanter, trying to avoid spilling.
3. Allow the wine to rest in the decanter for at least 30 minutes (longer for more tannic wines) before serving.

Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier. ♦

Find a video demonstration of the decanting method at finecooking.com

Choosing a decanter

There are so many decanters on the market, ranging from \$20 to \$250 and higher, that it can be hard to know which one to buy. As with many things, spending more doesn't necessarily get you a better product. A good all-purpose decanter should easily hold the contents of a standard 750-ml. bottle and should either be

bottle-shaped or have a flared base no more than 6 inches wide. This gives the decanter a good balance and air-to-wine contact ratio.

A good decanter should also have an opening wide enough (at least 2½ inches) to easily pour the wine through without fuss or mess. Stay away from the overly fancy—

and often overpriced—tall decanters with extremely wide-flanged bases and narrow openings. They may look stylish, but functionally they're a disaster, as it's almost impossible to empty them without spilling wine everywhere.

Four favorites

Here are a few nice decanters, all of which are practical and reasonably priced, from left:

Crate & Barrel

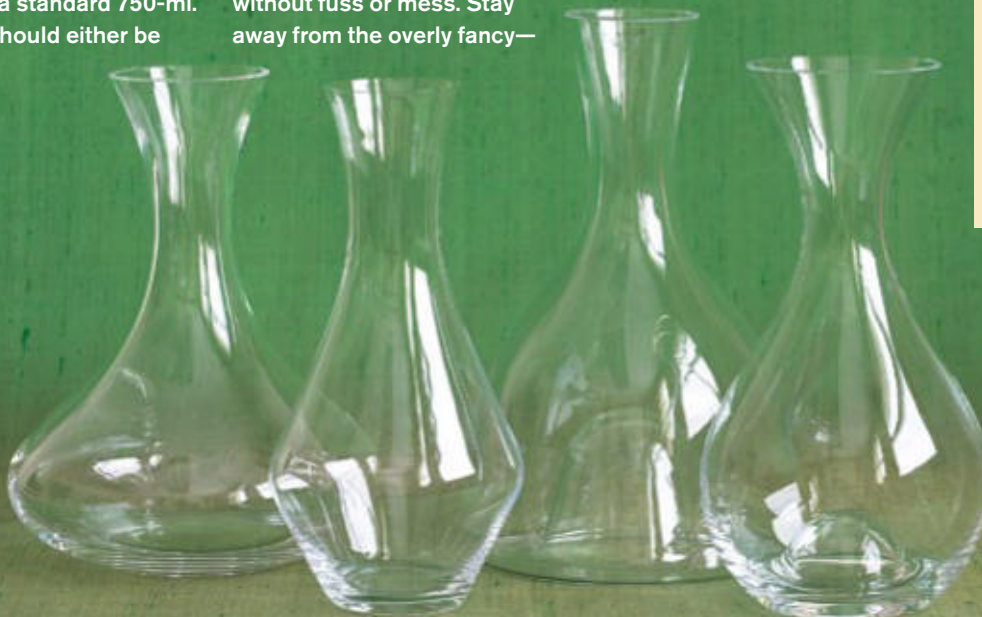
Gallery Carafe, \$21.95
(Crateandbarrel.com)

Riedel Merlot Decanter,
\$18.99
(Tableandhome.com)

Visual Decanter, \$59.95
(Wineenthusiast.com)

Wine Enthusiast

U Decanter, \$19.95
(Wineenthusiast.com)





Winning tip

Alternative use for muffin pans

Silicone muffin pans are a fantastic tool for freezing small amounts of sauce, stock, or pesto. Popping the frozen puck out of the flexible pan is a breeze and far easier than removing it from a traditional metal muffin tin or even an ice cube tray.

—Leigh Abernathy, *Tumbling Shoals, Arkansas*

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips. We'll pay for the ones we publish, and we'll give a prize for the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email fctips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner: a J.K. Adams pie board, gourmet rolling pin, and French dowel; retail value, \$100.



Vote Help us pick the winning tip for a future issue; go to finecooking.com/vote

For the love of garlic

I love garlic. It's gotten to the point where I put it into just about everything I cook. To save time peeling it, I use the flat side of my meat mallet to crush multiple cloves with one strike. The skin comes off easily, and the cloves are lightly smashed to bring out their flavor.

—Kaspar Shiu, *Stow, Ohio*

A watched pot never boils over

It happens to me all the time: I put on milk to boil, turn around, and it boils over. So now I use my digital thermometer with the alarm function to watch my pot for me. I set the alarm for 205°F. When it starts to beep, I have more than enough time to get to the stove and keep a close eye on the pot for the last few seconds before it begins to boil.

—Marc DiBiao, *Knivsta, Sweden*

Broiling made easy

I always forget to move my oven racks to the broiling position before the oven has heated, making the job more difficult and dangerous. When this happens, I invert my large cast-iron skillet onto the middle oven rack and set the item to be broiled on top of it. It provides a stable base and keeps my frustration to a minimum.

—Alison Buhler, *Sacramento, California*



Recycled fruit bowls

Halved and hollowed-out citrus fruit—like lemons, oranges, and grapefruit—make unusual and colorful individual bowls for serving ice cream, fruit salad, or even a gelatin dessert. To keep the bowls from wobbling, cut a thin slice from the bottom, taking care to leave the rind intact so there are no leaks.

—Karen Ann Bland, *Gove, Kansas*

Career Option



After 18 years as an investment counselor, Kathy was ready for a change and ready to reclaim time

for herself and her family. Kathy's passion: preparing great meals. With Culinary Business Academy training, Kathy put her new business skills to work. The result: a rewarding career as a Personal Chef, which allowed more family time. Determination, passion and excellent training were the ingredients that released Kathy from the corporate grasp and offered a fresh opportunity.

Supplemental Income Option

11 years with the same employer provided good benefits and a level of security for Susan. But Susan wanted more, so she became a part-time Personal Chef to earn a few extra dollars each month while doing something she truly enjoyed. The Culinary Business Academy provided the training, and combined with Susan's passion for making wonderful meals, she now maintains her regular corporate position and conducts her Personal Chef Service on weekends. Extra income, and a whole lot of fun too.



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Leftover bread becomes breadcrumbs

Whenever I have leftover bread—end pieces, sliced bread, or rolls not served at dinner parties—I throw them into a zip-top bag in my freezer. Then when I need breadcrumbs, I thaw a few pieces slightly and grate them on a box grater for small amounts or in my food processor for larger batches. The partially frozen bread transforms easily into fine crumbs. This way, bread never goes to waste, and I can always have fresh breadcrumbs in a matter of minutes.

—Deborah L. Pascuzzi,
Placitas, New Mexico



Make-ahead salad for quick weeknight dinners

My boyfriend and I love having salad with our dinner, but it's hard to find time in our hectic schedules to make a fresh salad every night. To remedy the situation, I line a large bowl with paper towels and prepare several days' worth of salad on top of the towel layer (excluding wet ingredients like tomatoes, which I add at the last minute). I cover the salad with another layer of paper towels, cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and I have the week's fresh salad waiting for me.

—Julie Turner,
East Kingston, New Hampshire

A new use for old spice jars

I don't throw away old spice jars anymore. Instead, after washing and drying them thoroughly, I fill them with assorted dry ingredients for sprinkling. I have one with flour for dusting surfaces when I'm baking (the holes in the cover release just the right amount of flour) and another with confectioners' sugar for garnishing cakes. I also have one filled with cinnamon-sugar for my morning coffee.

—Maria Olaguera,
Overland Park, Kansas



TOO GOOD TO FORGET

From *Fine Cooking* #16

No-stick grating

Before you shred cheese with a hand-held grater, spray the grater with cooking spray or rub it with a little oil. This will prevent the cheese from sticking and slowing down the job.

—Mary Jane Kaloustian,
Northville, Michigan

STAFF CORNER

Pancakes, anytime

One of my favorite things to do on a weekend morning is to whip up a double, or even triple, batch of my father's famous buttermilk pancakes. We don't eat them all at one time, of course, but rather let the pancakes cool completely, put them in single servings in zip-top bags, and store them in the refrigerator or freezer. They keep for up to two days in the fridge and up to one month in the freezer. After defrosting in the refrigerator overnight, just pop them into the toaster oven set at 350°F for about 5 minutes, and you can have pancakes for breakfast anytime, even on a weekday.

—Denise Mickelsen, assistant editor ♦



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what's new

Help for frittata flipping



Let's start by saying that you don't absolutely need to flip a frittata—it's fine to just finish it in the oven. But a flipped frittata gets nicely browned on both sides, and it tends to be slightly taller and lighter than an unflipped one. Flipping a frittata can be a bit stressful, though, even for the most experienced cook. You need to invert a plate over the pan, flip the frittata onto the plate, and

then slip it back into the pan, hoping it doesn't get all jumbled or, worse, fall to the floor.

With Calphalon's frittata pan set, the flipping part is stress free. When it's flipping time, you hold the two interlocking helper handles together with one hand, and the main handles together with the other. Then it's ready-set-flip, and the job is done. Better yet, when you're not making a frittata, one pan solos as a 10-inch skillet, and the other is a crêpe pan.

The set is nonstick and costs \$135 at Williams-Sonoma.com.

—Jennifer Armentrout, senior editor and test kitchen manager

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BY LISA WADDLE

Desserts under pressure

When I announced to my dinner guests the other night that the cheesecake I was serving came out of a pressure cooker, I got a few raised eyebrows. But one bite won over all skeptics. The lemon cheesecake I made with this Silicone Dessert Kit from Fagor was remarkably creamy, with a smoother, lighter texture than a similar one made in the oven. Because pressure cookers essentially cook with steam, they excel at keeping desserts like flans, custards, and bread puddings moist and creamy. I can't wait to try it with other desserts that usually call for a water bath, such as pudding cakes. The kit includes an 8-inch round silicone dish with a lid and four individual cups, as well as a stainless-steel rack, silicone spatula, and recipe book. Cost is \$25 at Fagoramerica.com.



New retro-look tools

While gadgets tend to be trendy, true kitchen tools never go out of style. That's the thinking behind this new line from Sur La Table called Things Cooks Love. It includes dozens of simple tools made of heavy-duty steel with wooden handles that are sealed and therefore dishwasher-safe. These solid, comfortable, well-made classics include those you probably already have but may want to upgrade, like the melon baller (\$17). It also includes vintage designs you may not have realized you need, such as the granny turning fork (\$16), perfect for checking the doneness of potatoes or spearing pickles from the jar, and the petite masher (\$20), sized for mashing garlic or a few bananas for baking. If you'd really like to treat a new cook to a great gift, you can purchase the entire 37-piece set for \$650.



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test drive

Throw an indoor grilling party

Want to be retro and cutting edge at the same time? Throw a raclette party. Like fondue, raclette is an age-old Swiss tradition involving melted cheese. Fondue enjoyed an American heyday in the '70s, but raclette never took hold in this country. That may change with the increasing availability of raclette grills, like this one from Trudeau.

How it works: You slice cheese into the eight small trays and slide them under the heating element to melt; then grill meats, seafood, and vegetables on top. Guests grab what they want from the grill—small potatoes and bread are traditional—and then pour the melted cheese over the top. The result is small bites of gooey goodness. I had some fussy friends over, and it was a great meal solution, as everyone could grill just what he or she wanted. The non-stick surface of this Trudeau grill worked especially well, as the cheese slid right out of the pans, the food developed nice grill marks, and it all cleaned up easily.

Origins: Raclette refers to both the dish made with the cheese and the cheese itself,



an Alpine cow's milk cheese with a creamy consistency that melts easily but doesn't get too runny. Raclette cheese, made on both the Swiss and French sides of the Alps, is worth seeking out for its nutty

smell and slightly salty, fruity taste. But if you can't find it, use any smooth-melting cheese, such as Gruyère or Gouda.

To buy: The Trudeau Reversible Party Grill set costs \$99.99 at Laprimashops.com.

A new generation of vacuum sealers: hand-held for small bags



Within a few weeks of each other, samples of two new food vacuum sealer bag systems landed on my desk. After several weeks of using both, I can understand their popularity. Both are hand-held, battery

sealers essentially take zip-top bags to the next level by removing as much air as possible from inside the bag. Although bags for both systems sealed quickly and held tight going from freezer to fridge to room temperature, once the bags were opened, they didn't reliably reseal. Both companies claim their bags can be reused, but I had mixed results, with some bags resealing fine and others slowly losing their seal.

Bottom line: Both are an easy-to-use, economical alternative to the vacuum sealer systems that cost upwards of \$100. They work well for long-term storage, but because resealing is unreliable, are less effective for food you use frequently, such as cheese or cereal.

To buy: The Vacu-Seal is \$29.99 (including five bags); additional bags are \$19.99 for 20 gallon-size bags or 26 quart-size bags. Order it at Vacu-Seal.com. The Handi-Vac costs \$9.99 (including three bags); additional bags are \$3.29 for 9 gallon-size bags or 14 quart-size bags. It's sold at Wal-Mart and Target.

operated (6 AA), and much more compact (and cheaper) than the countertop vacuum sealing systems on the market. **The Handi-Vac** (left) is made by Reynolds and the **Vacu-Seal** (above) is made by Pack-Mate. Both work with specially designed 1-quart and 1-gallon bags, but each has a different suction tip, so the bags are not interchangeable.

I found both handy for sealing vegetables, leftovers, nuts, baked goods, and meats to store in the fridge or freezer. With oxygen being the main culprit in food spoilage, vacuum



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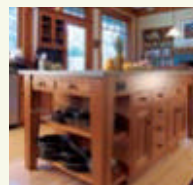


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buyer's guide

Espresso

Minus the Mess

Espresso pods & capsules—and the machines that use them—make it easy to serve perfect espresso at home

BY ADAM RIED

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds...” Perhaps, but honestly the home barista in me would welcome that hobgoblin with open arms. Even after years of making espresso at home with a decent, though not fancy, machine, my skills leave something to be desired. Assuming the machine holds up its end of the bargain—water temperature and pressure—there's still ample room for user error. Are the beans fresh? Did I grind them properly? Have I put the right amount of grounds into the filter and tamped them down just so?

Sometimes I get it all right, and my espressos are great, with a thick crema (the surface foam widely acknowledged to be one mark of a well-pulled espresso) and a smooth, bittersweet flavor. But I've choked down far too many bitter brews, wondering where I went wrong and why my espressos aren't good from one shot to the next.

And don't even get me started on the mess. Have you noticed that dry coffee grounds seem to go everywhere and wet grounds go nowhere as they cling to the filter basket for dear life? These phenomena can make spooning the dry grounds into the filter basket and then emptying the spent grounds from it—for every single shot—into

an irritating chore. The mere thought of it has led to more than one nice cup of tea in my day.

Now the good news. Coffee roasters and espresso machine manufacturers have a variety of new machines that promise to deliver consistently good espresso without the muss and fuss. Instead of loose espresso grounds, these machines use prepackaged single-serve doses of espresso. There's virtually no room for user error, so you're ensured consistent, high-quality espresso—easily and quickly, too.

Given the advantages and the increasing number of home espresso machines that are designed to use espresso pods and capsules, we thought it time to take a closer look at this phenomenon. Turns out the machines fall into three distinct categories, and we tried at least one of each type. Speaking generally, each machine lived up to its billing of simplicity, cleanliness, and consistency. But there are some noteworthy differences among them. On the following pages you'll find an overview of the options and the results of our trials.

What are espresso pods and capsules?

E.S.E. pods: “Easy Serving Espresso” pods are single-use disks of coffee with a paper filter covering, somewhat like tea bags. Each pod contains 7 grams of ground espresso, tamped and then hermetically sealed. These pods can be used in any E.S.E. machine.

Proprietary capsules: These are plastic capsules filled with a single serving of espresso that work exclusively with one manufacturer's machine. Illy's Hyper Espresso System capsules are clear with a red top, while Nespresso's capsules are colorful tubs resembling individual creamer containers.

Where to buy:

Illyusa.com
Nespresso.com
www.lavazza.com
1-800-espresso.com
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Espresso at the touch of a button

Francis Francis
X6 Trio



Bialetti Mokona



Krups XP4050



Espresso pod (E.S.E.) machines

About ten years ago, a few companies, spearheaded by IllyCaffé in Italy, formed a consortium and developed standardized, self-contained, easy-to-use coffee portions. Dubbed E.S.E. (for “Easy Serving Espresso”) pods, these packaged, single-use espresso servings contain 7 grams of ground coffee, tamped and hermetically sealed between two layers of filter paper.

Some experts say you can use the pods in the single-shot filter basket of any home espresso machine, but our research and limited testing suggest that E.S.E. pods work best in machines designed to use them specifically and exclusively. There’s a handful

on the market, ranging in price from about \$200 to \$1,000 and beyond.

We tried one of the most widely available machines, the distinctive-looking **Francis Francis X6 Trio** (\$500 at Illyusa.com), which offers brewing cycles for ristretto (a small shot), a standard shot, and lungo (a large shot). It was simple and clean to use: Once the machine reaches operating temperature, just put a pod in the filter basket, adjust the filter for a small, standard, or large shot, press a button to start the water flow, and 20 seconds later press the button again to stop the flow. The espressos always tasted great and had impressive crema.

Pros Consistency, ease, cleanliness. And the cost of the E.S.E. pods themselves, and thus the espressos, was reasonable. Our local upscale supermarket sold 18 Illy pods for \$12.95, which works out to about 72¢ per shot, and at our local Starbucks, 12-packs of Starbucks brand pods go for \$4.95, about 41¢ per serving. The pods are made of natural, biodegradable materials. And there’s no shortage of variety, as many coffee brands offer E.S.E. pods.

Cons There aren’t many. If you want to split hairs, serious espresso aficionados insist that the very best espressos are pulled by professionals with optimal conditions, materials, and machinery, and that because this unit uses pods only, it deprives you of that chance, however remote it may be.

The bottom line If you’re happy to have consistently good espresso with no guesswork or mess, an E.S.E. machine is a great bet. Write the check and don’t look back.

Convertible machines

Though “convertible” is not an industry term, it seems like a reasonable way to refer to machines that accept both loose grounds and E.S.E. pods. These machines are often marketed as E.S.E. compatible, because they come with an extra filter basket designed to accept E.S.E. pods. We tried two such machines: the **Bialetti Mokona** (\$349.50 at 1-800-espresso.com) and the **Krups XP4050** (\$279.99 at Amazon.com).

Pros With E.S.E. pods, the machines we tried consistently delivered good espresso quickly, easily, and cleanly. And the loose-grounds option let us indulge our inner barista, too.

Cons Though the flavor of the espressos was very good, the crema was unimpressive compared with the machines that used pods or capsules only.

The bottom line It was no surprise that with both machines, using the E.S.E. pods was faster, easier, and cleaner than using coffee grounds. The results were more consistent, too. Nonetheless, some espresso drinkers may appreciate the flexibility these convertible machines offer.



Francis Francis X7

Le Cube C185

Nespresso's
Essenza D90

Proprietary capsule machines

Instead of E.S.E. pods, the espresso machines in this category use capsules designed to work exclusively with one manufacturer's machines. These proprietary capsules won't work in other brands' machines. We tried a few of these, including Illy's **Francis Francis X7** (about \$699

at Illyusa.com) and **Nespresso's Essenza D90** and **Le Cube C185** (\$179.99 and \$349, respectively, at Nespresso.com). As a group, these machines could not possibly be simpler to use. Quite literally, you can get espresso at the push (or two) of a button.

Pros Each of these machines produced an awesome crema on one delicious espresso after another. Dead easy to use: Just slide a capsule into the filter or specially designed slot, lock the capsule in place, and press a button. Some machines require you to time your own brewing, while others do it for you. About 20 seconds later, you have a lovely espresso.

Cons Although the espressos we made with the X7's Illy Hyper Espresso System capsules and the Nespresso capsules tasted great and had excellent cremas, the opportunity to explore coffees beyond each machine's brand is nonexistent. You're locked into using the proprietary capsule, though each brand does offer a variety of roasts.

Waste is also a big concern with this category. Though the foil Nes-

presso capsules are recyclable, it's best to empty them of spent grounds and rinse them first, a time-consuming and messy extra step that counters the hands-off, mess-free ease with which the machines operate. The situation with the hard plastic Illy Hyper Espresso capsules for the X7 is even trickier. Though a company representative assured us that the capsules are recyclable, we were not able to open them to empty and rinse them, so rather than struggling to do the right thing—recycle—we faced a very strong temptation to simply toss the spent capsules into the trash.

The bottom line If making impressive espresso consistently and easily is your primary concern, these machines deliver, but if you're a committed recycler you might want to think twice before going this route.

How we tested

It's possible to spend \$1,500 or more on an E.S.E.-compatible home espresso machine, but we focused on lower-priced models, ranging from \$180 to \$700. Three of our machines, the two Nespresso models and the Francis Francis X7, use their own proprietary coffee capsules. The Francis Francis X6 Trio uses E.S.E. pods only, and the Krups XP4050 and the Bialetti Mokona accept both loose grounds and E.S.E. pods (each in its own filter basket).

We tested the six machines by pulling 40-ml. espresso shots in a home kitchen using Illy brand medium-roast E.S.E. pods whenever possible. For the Francis Francis X7 we used the Illy medium-roast Hyper Espresso System plastic capsules that go with the machine, and for both Nespresso models we used Nespresso's capsules (the medium-roast Arpeggio blend). For the two machines that worked with loose grounds as well as E.S.E. pods, the Krups and the Bialetti, we used pre-ground Illy medium-roast coffee as well as the E.S.E. pods.

We made all the espressos using cold, filtered tap water. We assessed the first espressos we made after switching on the machines, as well as shots pulled after the machines were allowed to heat up for two hours. Ease of use, the flavor of the espresso (tasted in a heated china demitasse), its temperature (the ideal range being between 150° and 180°F), and the quality of the crema were the key evaluation criteria.

Food writer and culinary equipment reviewer Adam Ried is the cooking columnist for the Boston Globe Magazine. ♦

A top-down photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with a smooth, light green soup. The soup is garnished with a cluster of golden-brown, cubed croutons on the left side, and scattered finely chopped green chives throughout. The bowl is set against a light yellow background.

A Cure for

Spring
Fever

menu

Serves six to eight

**Asparagus Soup with
Saffron Croutons**



**Rack of Lamb with
Fresh Mint, Golden Raisin
& Pine Nut Relish**



**Cucumber, Fennel &
Roasted Potato Salad with
Parsleyed Yogurt**



**Angel Food Cake with
Strawberries &
Whipped Cream**

A cool soup, a refreshing salad, and a mint relish lighten up a menu starring lamb

BY BARBARA LYNCH

Many chefs (me included) talk about the importance of seasonality in their cooking. Mostly the talk focuses on using locally grown produce for both environmental and aesthetic reasons, which is a good thing. But for me, a Boston native, it's as much about the emotional pull of the season as anything else. As soon as we get that tease of a 70°F day in early April, I'm done with all that hearty food I couldn't get enough of back in November. Even when the temperature plummets again—as it always does in this part of the country before rising slowly and steadily—I don't want to see anything braised or stewed. All I



crave is bright color, crisp textures, and fresh flavors.

This menu more than satisfies that craving. First, it features classic harbingers of spring like asparagus and lamb. But the accompaniments—fragrant, saffron-flecked croutons for the soup and a minty-garlicky relish for the lamb—add excitement without obscuring the flavor of the asparagus or the meat. (From many years of cooking for my large meat-and-potatoes family, I've learned that serving tried-and-true classics along with something a little unexpected keeps everyone happy. I get to make something interesting and delicious, and they don't have their comfort level pushed too far.)

The salad, however, is what I really love about this menu. A mix of roasted fingerling potatoes, cucumber, fennel, celery, and red onion, it's served with a dollop of cool, creamy yogurt on the same plate as the lamb. The result is an unbelievably refreshing, almost palate-cleansing side dish. The combination of that salad, the relish—which includes toasty pine nuts and sweet plump raisins—the yogurt, and the tender lamb with its juices means that every bite offers a different and delicious taste.

Finally, this menu is also great for entertaining. The prep work is quick, and much of it can be done ahead (see the timeline at far right). The menu can also be multiplied easily if you have the oven space. If, for example, I'm having my brothers and sisters over for Easter, I just roast more lamb. Everything else can be sized up, too, while the angel food cake—no twist here, just straight-ahead lightness topped with strawberries and whipped cream—will easily give you 10 slices. (Of course, if everybody in my family comes over—I have six siblings—I have to make two cakes.)



Asparagus Soup with Saffron Croutons

Serves six to eight.

I think this soup is best cool, but it's also tasty warm. You can make it ahead and let the weather dictate which way to go.

FOR THE CROUTONS:

3 to 4 slices of fine-grain white bread, such as Pepperidge Farm
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
¼ tsp. saffron threads
Kosher salt

FOR THE SOUP:

2 bunches asparagus (about 2 lb.)
4 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 large shallots, chopped (about ½ cup)
2 cups heavy cream
Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
½ tsp. fresh lemon juice; more to taste
2 tsp. thinly sliced chives

Make the croutons: Cut the crust off the bread and discard. Cut the bread into tiny cubes (about ⅓ inch) to yield about 1½ cups.

Heat the olive oil in a 10-inch sauté pan over medium-low heat. Crumble the saffron and gently cook for about 1 minute to infuse the oil with the saffron color. Watch your heat; saffron can burn quickly. Add the bread cubes and toss to coat with the oil. Sprinkle with ¼ tsp. salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the croutons are

golden and crunchy, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer the croutons to a plate to cool. (Once completely cooled, they can be stored in an airtight container for a couple of days.)

Make the soup: Trim the tough bottoms off the asparagus and cut the rest of the spears into 1-inch pieces.

Melt the butter in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the shallots, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft but not colored, about 5 minutes. Add the cream, 2 cups of water, 2 tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. white pepper. Increase the heat to high and bring the liquid to a boil. Add the asparagus, lower to a simmer, and cook until the asparagus is tender (taste a piece to see) but still quite green, about 5 minutes.

Purée the soup in batches in a blender and pass it through a fine strainer, pressing on the solids, into a bowl (if you plan to serve it cold) or into a clean saucepan. (The soup will keep, covered and refrigerated, for up to 2 days.)

To serve, reheat the soup if serving it warm. Stir in the lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper and more lemon juice, if you like. Serve the soup in cups or small bowls, topped with the croutons and chives.

Rack of Lamb with Fresh Mint, Golden Raisin & Pine Nut Relish

Serves six to eight.

A bright topping, sort of a cross between a gremolata and a sauce, dresses up the otherwise straightforward roast lamb; it also complements the crisp, bright flavors of the salad. If you want deeper flavor in the relish, add a finely minced anchovy. Left-over relish is delicious on grilled or roasted eggplant.

- 1 cup fresh mint leaves, coarsely chopped**
- ½ cup golden raisins, plumped in hot water for at least 10 minutes and drained**
- ½ cup pine nuts, toasted**
- 2 to 3 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 tsp.)**
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon**
- 1½ tsp. fresh lemon juice**
- ¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 racks of lamb (8 ribs and 1 to 1½ lb. each), frenched and at room temperature (see “Buying a rack of lamb” at right)**

In a small bowl, combine the mint, raisins, pine nuts, garlic, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Stir in ¼ cup of the olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Season the lamb well on all sides with salt and

pepper. Heat the remaining 2 Tbs. of olive oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Working in batches if necessary, sear the lamb racks on all sides until well browned, about 5 minutes per batch. Put the browned racks bone side down on a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the meat reads 125° to 130°F for rare to medium rare, 20 to 25 minutes, or 135° to 140°F for medium rare to medium, 25 to 30 minutes. Let the lamb rest for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing it into chops.

Serve the chops on the same plate as the salad (see p. 44) with some of the mint relish spooned around the meat.



Buying a rack of lamb

Though a rack of lamb looks best frenched—meaning it's been trimmed, with much of the meat and fat between the ribs removed—some butchers get a little overzealous, leaving just the tiniest bit of loin on the bone.

If you go to a full-service butcher (and even some supermarkets have an actual person back there who will cut and carve for you), ask him to leave some of the meat and fat near the rib-eye. This delicious part of the rib compels you to pick up the bone and gnaw to get every last luscious bit.

Another, potentially cheaper, option is to buy a whole untrimmed rack (be sure the chine bone has been removed) and trim it yourself. See From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for directions.

Getting it all done, stress free

Up to two days ahead:

Cook and purée the soup.
Cool, cover, and refrigerate.

Up to one day ahead:

Bake the cake. Let it cool completely before gently wrapping in plastic wrap.

Make the croutons for the soup. Let cool completely before storing airtight at room temperature.

Make the relish. Cover and refrigerate.

A few hours before dinner:

Combine the yogurt and parsley. Cover and refrigerate.

Roast the potatoes. Keep them at room temperature on the baking sheet; reheat gently if you want to serve them warm.

Cook the green beans and slice the vegetables. Gently combine them in a large bowl, cover with a damp paper towel, and refrigerate.

Toss the strawberries with the sugar. Cover and refrigerate.

An hour before dinner:

Sear and roast the lamb. Let rest for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing and serving.

Remove the relish from the refrigerator and let it come to room temperature.

A half-hour before dinner:

Remove the strawberries from the refrigerator.

Slice the chives for the soup. Cover with plastic wrap and keep at room temperature.

Just before each course:

Reheat the soup if serving warm, and season to taste with lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

Toss the vegetables for the salad with the lemon and olive oil.

Slice the lamb into chops. Give the relish a stir.

Season the yogurt mixture to taste with additional salt and pepper.

Whip the cream for the angel food cake.

Wine choices

The asparagus soup calls for a dry, crisp white with an herbal touch. A young Chenin Blanc from France fits the bill, and the 2006 Domaine Pichot Vouvray (\$14) is one of the best I've recently tasted.

A Cabernet Sauvignon, with its blackcurrant fruit and firm tannins, would complement the rich flavor of the lamb. The 2005 Wynns Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon (\$22) from South Australia is an especially vibrant choice.

Finally, a crisp medium-sweet dessert wine with spice notes would be perfect with the angel food cake. Look for the 2006 Bonny Doon Muscat Vin de Glacière (\$18).

—Tim Gaiser,
master sommelier



Cucumber, Fennel & Roasted Potato Salad with Parsleyed Yogurt

Serves six to eight.

- 1½ lb. fingerling potatoes**
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more to taste**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ lb. haricots verts or slender green beans, trimmed**
- 1½ cups plain whole-milk Greek yogurt, such as Fage Total**
- 1½ Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 3 medium stalks celery, trimmed and sliced ⅛ inch thick on a sharp diagonal**
- 1 English cucumber, peeled, cut in half lengthwise, seeded, and sliced ⅛ inch thick on the diagonal**
- 1 medium bulb fennel (about 1 lb.), trimmed, cut in half, cored, and sliced crosswise ⅛ inch thick**
- 1 small red onion, halved and sliced crosswise ⅛ inch thick**
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste**

Heat the oven to 400°F. On a small rimmed baking sheet, toss the potatoes with 1 Tbs. of the oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Roast until tender when pierced with a skewer, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool the potatoes; they can be served still warm or at room temperature.

Meanwhile, bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil. Cook the haricots verts until just tender (taste one to see), 3 to 4 minutes. Drain in a colander and run under cold water until cool.

Combine the yogurt and parsley and season well with salt and pepper; keep chilled until ready to serve.

To serve, halve or quarter any larger fingerlings but leave the tiny ones whole. Combine the potatoes, haricots verts, celery, cucumber, fennel, and red onion in a large bowl and toss with the remaining 3 Tbs. oil and the lemon

juice. Season well with salt and pepper and toss again. Taste and add more lemon juice or olive oil if needed.

Divide the salad among six to eight plates, piling it toward the center of each plate. Drop a large dollop of yogurt next to each salad.

Make ahead: You can prepare both the yogurt and the vegetables a few hours ahead of serving. Stir together the yogurt, parsley, and seasonings and refrigerate, covered. Combine all the vegetables but the potatoes in a bowl but don't dress them. Cover the vegetables with a damp paper towel and keep refrigerated; leave the potatoes at room temperature.

Angel Food Cake with Strawberries & Whipped Cream

*Yields one 10-inch cake;
serves eight to ten.*

As an alternative to separating eggs for this cake, you can purchase liquid egg whites; for more information, see *Where to Buy It*, p. 84.

FOR THE CAKE:

1½ cups egg whites (from 11 large eggs)
4 oz. (¾ cup plus 2 Tbs.) all-purpose flour
1½ cups granulated sugar
Pinch kosher salt
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES:

**¾ lb. strawberries, hulled and sliced
(about 3 cups)**
2 Tbs. granulated sugar
1 Tbs. Grand Marnier (optional)

**Lightly sweetened whipped cream,
for serving**

Make the cake: Put the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment and let them warm until they're a little cooler than room temperature (about 60°F), about 1½ hours. (To speed up this step, set the mixer bowl in a bowl of lukewarm water and stir the whites occasionally; check the temperature frequently.)

Position a rack in the bottom third of the oven and heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready a 10-inch tube pan with removable bottom. Sift together the flour, ½ cup of the sugar, and the salt; set aside.

Add the lemon juice to the egg whites and beat on medium-low speed until the mixture is quite frothy and has increased a little in volume, 1 to 2 minutes. Increase the speed to medium and slowly, about a tablespoon at a time, add the remaining 1 cup of sugar. Continue beating until the whites thicken and form soft droopy peaks when the beater is lifted, 6 to 7 minutes from when you began adding sugar. Do not beat the whites until stiff. In the final minute or so of beating, add the vanilla extract. The mixture should be voluminous and light but still fluid enough to pour.

Sprinkle about one fifth of the flour and sugar mixture over the egg whites and with a large spatula, gently fold it in. Con-

tinue folding in the remaining flour-sugar mixture in 4 more additions until it's fully incorporated. Gently pour the batter into the ungreased tube pan. Run a spatula once through the batter to eliminate any big air bubbles and then lightly smooth the batter if necessary.

Bake until the top is a light golden color and the cake feels spongy and springs back when touched very lightly, 45 to 55 minutes.

Prepare the strawberries: Meanwhile, toss the berries with the sugar and Grand Marnier (if using) and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving (you can prepare the berries up to 6 hours ahead).

When the cake is done, insert the neck of a bottle or a funnel into the tube part of the pan and invert the pan. Let the cake cool completely before removing it from the pan. (Cooling the cake upside down keeps it from collapsing before it cools,

and elevating it on a bottle or funnel helps air circulate for faster cooling.)

To remove the cake, run a thin knife or spatula around it to loosen it. Lift the cake (still on the tube section) from the pan. Run the knife or spatula between the cake and the bottom of the pan. Invert the cake onto a cake plate and remove the tube section.

Slice the cake with a serrated knife using a gentle sawing motion. Serve topped with the strawberries and a dollop of whipped cream.

Barbara Lynch is the chef-owner of No. 9 Park, B&G Oysters, and The Butcher Shop, all in Boston. ♦



How to Cook a Perfect Fish Fillet



Getting a great sear

- ❖ Get the pan nice and hot before you add the fish.
- ❖ Don't crowd the pan, or the fillets will steam.
- ❖ Leave the fish undisturbed in the hot pan for 2 or 3 minutes before turning; lift a corner to check that the bottom is browned.

Sear first and then finish in the oven for a crisp crust and even doneness

BY TOM DOUGLAS WITH SHELLEY LANCE

Growing up in a Catholic household, Fridays meant fish for dinner—and that meant canned salmon or fish sticks. Shrimp and crab were not in the budget unless Grandma Fogarty was treating. While easy to make, these dishes were (thankfully) left behind as my chef skills improved and I realized how good a sear-roasted fish fillet could be. Now, 30 years later, it's a snap for me to cook beautiful fish that has a delicate crust and is still moist inside—and you can, too, by learning to sear-roast.

This restaurant technique starts by browning the fillet on one side in a sauté pan and then flipping and finishing the cooking in a hot oven. The result is a nicely browned fillet that's also perfectly done. Nothing gives you a gorgeous, flavorful sear like a heavy pan over a hot burner. But if you flip the fish and finish cooking it over that burner, you will need to give it all your attention and more than a little finesse. You'll have to keep adjusting the heat of the burner and watching your fish very carefully; otherwise, you may brown the outside too much before the fish is done inside. On the other hand, if you finish it in the oven, the heat will envelop your fillet and cook it more evenly, giving you more control over the doneness.

Sear-roasting works well for many types of fish, such as salmon (not

the canned fish from my childhood), halibut, cod, tuna, and swordfish. Solid, meaty fillets work best with this technique, rather than fragile fillets like a thin piece of sole.

A heavy-duty ovenproof skillet is vital to pulling off this technique, as it helps create the browned crust. Size is also important; for cooking four fish fillets, a 12-inch skillet is perfect. If you crowd the pan, you run the risk that the fillets will steam instead of sear. Work in batches or use more than one skillet if you want more than four servings.

Be sure to start by heating the skillet and your oven. The pan must be hot or you won't develop a flavorful crust. And because the searing takes only a few minutes, you don't want to wait for your oven to heat up to 425°F.

Once you add your fish to the pan, let it be. I know it's tempting to nudge and rearrange the fillets, but fussing with the fish will prevent the crust from forming—and that crust translates into flavor. Resist the urge to start checking the fish for about two minutes, when you can gently lift a corner with a spatula to see if the bottom is browned (see the photo at left). If it is, you're ready to flip the fillets and then put the pan in the oven to finish cooking.

Several factors determine how long your fish will take to finish cooking in the oven: the heat of your



burner and how long you sear the fillets, the actual temperature of your oven, the thickness of the fillets, and the type of fish. To judge if your fish is fully cooked, make a small cut with a paring knife to see if the flesh has turned from translucent to opaque.

To get the most from this simple and fast cooking method, it's important to season your fish well. Sometimes I like to pat on a spice rub before searing, to add color and flavor. If you're not using a spice rub, season the fish well with salt and pepper before searing. I also like to brighten the richness of sear-roasted fish with a crisp, fresh-tasting salad or pickle. For each of these recipes, I've paired the fish with an intensely flavored vegetable mixture that can be served atop the fillet.

Chinese Five-Spice Halibut with Pickled Red Pepper & Ginger

Serves four.

If you can, choose square, compact fillets for this recipe instead of longer, narrower ones. They're easier to maneuver in the pan.

FOR THE PICKLE:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup very thinly sliced red bell pepper (from about half a pepper)**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. peeled and very finely julienned ginger (from a knob about $\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches)**
- 1 tsp. peanut, vegetable, or grapeseed oil**
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced**
- 2 Tbs. plain seasoned rice vinegar**
- 2 Tbs. mirin**
- 1 scallion, trimmed, cut crosswise into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch lengths, and thinly slivered lengthwise**
- 1 tsp. Asian sesame oil**

FOR THE SPICE RUB:

- 1 Tbs. finely grated orange zest**
- 1 Tbs. light brown sugar**
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt**
- 1 tsp. five-spice powder**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper**
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cayenne**

FOR THE FISH:

- 4 skinless halibut fillets (about 6 oz. each)**
- 3 Tbs. peanut, vegetable, or grapeseed oil**

Heat the oven to 425°F.

Make the pickle: In a heatproof bowl, stir together the bell pepper and ginger. In a small saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the garlic and stir until lightly golden, about 1 minute. Add the vinegar, mirin, and 2 Tbs. water and bring to a boil. Pour the boiling liquid over the red pepper and ginger and let sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes and up to 1 hour.

Make the spice rub: In a small bowl, mix the spice rub ingredients. Use your fingertips to blend the zest well with the spices.

Sear-roast the fish: Coat all sides of the halibut fillets with the rub and set on a plate. Heat the oil in a heavy 12-inch oven-proof skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is shimmering hot, arrange the halibut fillets evenly in the pan, skinned side up. Sear for about 2 minutes, without moving; then use a slotted metal spatula to lift a piece of fish and check the color. (Note: watch carefully so the sugar in the rub doesn't burn. If necessary, reduce the heat.) When the fillets are nicely browned, flip them and put the pan in the oven.

Roast until the halibut is just cooked in the middle, 5 to 6 minutes. (If your fillets are thick, check again that the sugar in the rub does not burn while the fish is in the oven. You can turn the fish on one or both edges to avoid burning the rub.) Remove the pan from the oven and transfer the halibut to serving plates.

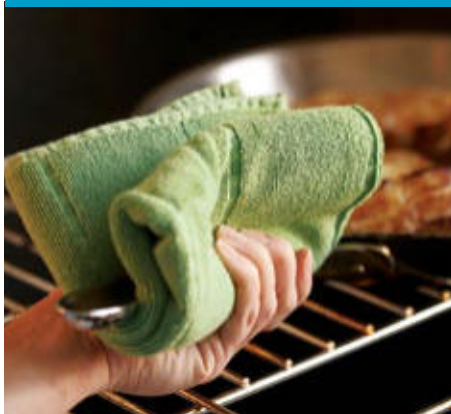
Drain the pickled red pepper and ginger, discarding the liquid, and toss with the scallion and sesame oil in a small bowl. Top each portion of halibut with some of the pickle and serve.

Wine suggestion

Look for a crisp, slightly sweet Riesling like the 2006 Fritz Haag Estate Riesling from Mosel (\$18).

Keep your cool

In these recipes, the skillet goes from stovetop to oven. Be sure to use a potholder or a dry, folded dishtowel when you remove the skillet from the oven and leave it draped over the handle to remind you that the pan is hot.



reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave the Sear-Roasted Cod with Horseradish Aioli & Lemon-Zest Breadcrumbs a real-world test. Here are the results:

The directions for the sear-roasting technique were easy to follow, and the results were fantastic. We loved the horseradish aioli and the breadcrumbs, too. Their textures and flavors were the perfect complements to the mild, flaky fish. Since the aioli and breadcrumbs could both be made in advance, and the fish only took a few minutes to cook, I loved that I was able to put together a company-worthy dinner with very little effort.

—Amy Anderson
Austin, Texas



Sear-Roasted Haddock or Cod with Horseradish Aioli & Lemon-Zest Breadcrumbs

Serves four.

FOR THE LEMON-ZEST BREADCRUMBS:

3 Tbs. olive oil
1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs
(from a rustic loaf)
1 Tbs. finely grated lemon zest
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE HORSE RADISH AIOLI:

5 Tbs. mayonnaise
2 tsp. prepared horseradish
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. fresh lemon juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. minced garlic
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. tomato paste
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE FISH:

3 Tbs. olive oil
4 thick skinless haddock or cod fillets,
about 6 oz. each
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves,
washed and dried
1 lemon
About 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Heat the oven to 425°F.

Make the lemon-zest breadcrumbs: In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the breadcrumbs and cook, stirring, until golden and crunchy, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and let cool. Stir in the lemon zest and season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside at room temperature.

Make the horseradish aioli: In a small bowl, mix the aioli ingredients, adding salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate.

Sear-roast the fish: Heat the oil in a heavy 12-inch nonstick ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Pat the fish dry with a paper towel and season on both sides with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pepper. When the oil is shimmering hot, arrange the fillets evenly in the pan, skinned side up. Sear for about 2 minutes, without moving; then use a slotted metal spatula to lift a piece of fish and check the color. When the fillets are nicely browned, flip them and remove the pan from the heat.

Spread the seared side of each fillet with some of the aioli and then a layer of breadcrumbs. (You may or may not need all of the aioli and crumbs.) Put the pan in the oven and roast until the fish is cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes.

While the fish is roasting, put the parsley leaves in a small bowl; cut the lemon in half and squeeze some juice from one half over the parsley, to taste. Drizzle the parsley with enough extra-virgin olive oil to lightly coat the leaves, season with salt and pepper, and toss. The parsley should taste bright and lemony. Cut the remaining lemon half into four wedges.

When the fish is cooked, remove the pan from the oven and transfer the fillets to plates. Top each with some of the parsley salad and garnish with a lemon wedge.

Wine suggestion

Try a dry, fruity rosé like the 2006 **Château La Rouvière Bandol Rosé (\$22).**

Spice-Rubbed & Sear-Roasted Salmon with Honey-Glazed Fennel

Serves four.

If you can't find fennel pollen, you can omit it; the dish will still be very flavorful. If you use paprika instead of sumac, the fish and fennel will take on a rich, red hue.

FOR THE SPICE RUB:

1 Tbs. coriander seeds

2 Tbs. ground sumac (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for more information) or sweet paprika

2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

2 tsp. kosher salt

FOR THE FISH AND FENNEL:

Four 6-oz. skinless salmon fillets, preferably wild

4½ tsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 Tbs. honey

3 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. olive oil

1 small fennel bulb, quartered, cored, and sliced lengthwise about ⅜ inch thick, to yield 1½ cups (save about ½ cup fronds for garnish)

One-half Granny Smith apple

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ to ¾ tsp. fennel pollen (optional; see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for more information)

Heat the oven to 425°F.

Make the spice rub: In a small skillet, heat the coriander seeds over medium heat, stirring frequently, until they are lightly golden brown and aromatic, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly. Grind the seeds in an electric grinder and transfer to a small bowl. Use your fingers to stir in the sumac or paprika, lemon zest, and salt.

Sear-roast the fish and fennel: Generously coat the salmon fillets on all sides with the rub and set the fillets on a plate.

In a small bowl, stir together 4 tsp. of the lemon juice and the honey.

In a heavy 12-inch ovenproof skillet, heat 3 Tbs. of the oil over medium-high heat. When the oil is shimmering hot, arrange the salmon fillets evenly in the pan, skinned side up. Add the fennel to

the pan, fitting it into the spaces around the fish. (It will look like there's not much room, but you will be able to squeeze this amount of fennel around the fillets.) Sear for about 2 minutes, without moving; then use a slotted metal spatula to lift a piece of fish and check the color. When the fillets are nicely browned, flip them and put the pan in the oven. Roast until the salmon is barely cooked in the center, 4 to 6 minutes.

While the salmon is roasting, toss the fennel fronds in a medium bowl with the remaining 1 tsp. olive oil. Core the apple half and cut it into matchsticks. Add to the fennel fronds. Sprinkle the remaining ½ tsp. lemon juice over the apples, season with salt and pepper, and toss again.

When the salmon is cooked, remove the pan from the oven and transfer the salmon with the spatula to serving plates. Taste the fennel; if it is still crunchy, set the pan over medium heat and cook the fennel a few minutes more, stirring occasionally, until it's tender. With the spatula, transfer the fennel to a small plate.

Pour off and discard any oil in the pan, blotting the pan with a wad of paper towels (there will be some browned spice rub sticking to the pan, which is fine). Return the pan to the stove over medium-high heat and add the lemon-honey mixture. Bring to a boil, stirring with a whisk or wooden spoon to release the browned bits. Add the cooked fennel and stir to coat it with the glaze. Remove the pan from the heat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Top each piece of salmon with some of the glazed fennel and then a little mound of apple salad. If any glaze remains in the pan, drizzle some around each piece of salmon. Sprinkle each portion with a good pinch of fennel pollen, if using, and serve immediately.

Wine suggestion

A zesty, herbal Sauvignon Blanc would pair well with the sweetness of the honey glaze and the richness of the salmon. Try the 2007 Spy Valley, Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, from New Zealand (\$16).

Seattle chef Tom Douglas has helped define Northwest cuisine through his five restaurants, a line of specialty foods, and three cookbooks, written with Shelley Lance. ♦



Peas from the Pod

Sweet and tender, quick to cook, and incredibly versatile, fresh peas are the ultimate springtime treat

BY ANNIE WAYTE

When I was growing up in England, I knew spring had finally arrived when my grandmother started tossing young, freshly shelled peas just barely blanched in boiling water with chopped fresh mint and a

generous knob of butter. I loved the pure, sweet flavor of those peas and their amazing tenderness, with just a hint of crunch. They were available for only a few short weeks, so we ate them almost every day until we could no longer find them at the store.

Fast-forward a couple of decades. Not much has changed now that I'm a chef in New York. In May, when mounds of green pea pods begin to appear in local markets, I buy pounds of them several times a week so I don't miss out on this rare spring treat. And while I admit that shelling all those peas isn't my favorite activity, having lots of fresh, sweet, bright-green peas at hand to make tasty side dishes or to toss in salads or

pastas is the ultimate indulgence of the season—and more than enough reward for a little time spent shelling.

What I also like about peas—aside from their sweet flavor—is that they take only a few minutes to cook, particularly when they're very fresh and young, so they're a perfect ingredient for fast weeknight dishes. In fact, the secret to maintaining their sweetness and bright-green color is to cook them as little as possible, just enough to make them tender. What's more, peas lend themselves to almost any cooking method, from boiling and steaming to sautéing, stir-frying, and quick-braising. You can make them the star of a side dish, as in my quick-braised peas at right, purée them into a soup, add them to a stew, or briefly blanch them and toss them in

risottos or pastas. And when they're small and tender, they're also great raw in salads.

Peas' mild sweetness pairs well with many different flavors. Cured meats like bacon, pancetta, prosciutto, smoked ham, and chorizo work wonderfully with peas, as their pronounced saltiness complements peas' gentle flavor. Fresh mint is also a classic flavor partner, bringing peas to life in an instant. But I also like pairing peas with other fresh spring herbs such as basil, chervil, chives, dill, and tarragon. Peas are a natural with onions, scallions, and other alliums, and they pair well with other spring vegetables like asparagus, new potatoes, carrots, and fava beans. When I cook peas as a side dish, I serve them with chicken, lamb, or duck and with any kind of fish, especially cod, salmon, and scallops (see the back cover).





Quick-Braised Peas, Lettuce & Scallions

Serves four.

Although young peas are better, you can use mature peas here—just cook them longer. And you can use pea broth (see the tip on p. 54) instead of chicken broth. I love to serve this dish with grilled spring lamb, but it also goes well with chicken, duck, and fish.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
10 scallions (white and light green parts), halved lengthwise
2 cups fresh shelled peas (from about 2 lb. unshelled) or frozen peas

1 medium head butter lettuce, leaves separated, washed, and dried
½ cup lower-salt chicken broth or water
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup chopped fresh mint
1 Tbs. crème fraîche

Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat. Add the scallions and cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften, 2 to 3 minutes (don't let them brown). Increase the heat to medium, add the peas and lettuce and continue

to cook, tossing with tongs, until the lettuce begins to wilt, 2 minutes more. Add the broth and a pinch of salt and pepper. Stir well and bring to a simmer.

Reduce the heat to medium low, cover, and simmer until the peas are just tender, 5 to 8 minutes for fresh peas, 3 to 4 minutes for frozen. Remove the lid and add the mint and crème fraîche. Stir well and simmer 2 minutes more to meld the flavors. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve.

Pea, Butter Lettuce & Herb Salad

Serves four.

This salad is best with very fresh, young peas that are tender enough to be eaten just barely blanched or even raw.

1 cup fresh shelled peas (about 1 lb. unshelled) or frozen peas

Kosher salt

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

Freshly ground black pepper

1 small head butter lettuce, washed and dried, leaves torn into bite-size pieces

6 medium radishes, thinly sliced

4 scallions (white and light-green parts), thinly sliced on the diagonal

¼ cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

¼ cup loosely packed fresh chervil leaves

2 Tbs. very coarsely chopped fresh tarragon

2 Tbs. thinly sliced chives

3 oz. ricotta salata, shaved thinly with a vegetable peeler (optional)

If using fresh peas, sample them. If they are young, sweet, and tender, keep them raw. If they are older and a bit tough, blanch them in a small pot of boiling salted water until just tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Drain and spread them on a baking sheet in a single layer to cool. If using frozen peas, thaw them by leaving them at room temperature or by running them under warm water.

In a small bowl, whisk the oil with the lemon juice, lemon zest, and salt and pepper to taste.

Just before serving, toss the peas in a small bowl with 1 Tbs. of the dressing. Toss the butter lettuce, radishes, scallions, and herbs in a large bowl with just enough of the remaining dressing to lightly coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Arrange the salad on individual serving plates and top with the peas and the ricotta salata (if using).





What you need to know about buying & storing fresh peas

Choose small, very fresh peas

For best flavor, choose small peas, which are younger, sweeter, and more tender than large ones, and make sure they're as fresh as possible. Once picked, peas' high sugar content changes, causing them to lose much of their sweetness and become starchy and dull. You know peas are fresh when their pods are firm and green, so avoid any that are yellowing or wilting. Go for medium pods rather than large, thick-skinned ones, which are more mature and contain larger, tougher peas. Break open a pod and check the peas inside. They should be small, bright green, and firm; if you taste one, it should be tender and sweet.

If all you can find are large, mature peas, opt for frozen peas instead (see the sidebar, p. 55). Mature peas are not as tender and sweet as young ones, and they're less versatile. They need to be cooked longer and more slowly, and I find that their firmer texture works well only in stews and braises.

Use them quickly or freeze them

Peas don't have much of a shelf life, so I don't recommend storing them—in their pods or shelled—for very long. Store pods in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator and use them within a couple of days. Once they're shelled, the best way to store peas is to freeze them. First blanch them for a minute or two in boiling salted water and then shock them in an ice-water bath until cool, to help maintain their bright color. Drain and freeze them in zip-top bags. They will keep for five to six months.

tip:

1 pound peas in their pods yields about 6 ounces (1 cup) shelled peas.





Shelling peas is easy

OK, I admit it: Shelling peas is a bit tedious, but it's easy and worth every second. To do it, remove the stem end of the pod, peel the stringy fiber from the seam, pry the pod open, and run your thumb along the interior to detach the peas.

tip: Don't throw those pods away—make broth

After you've shelled all those peas, save the empty pods for making a simple pea broth, which you can use to enhance the flavor of soups, stews, and braises, including the ones here. To make the broth, put the pods in a large pot and cover with water by at least 1 inch. Add a pinch of salt and a roughly chopped onion. Simmer for about 25 minutes, strain, and discard the pods. The broth will keep for two days in the refrigerator and for about a month in the freezer.



Pea & Mint Soup with Lemon Cream

Serves four to six.

You can serve this soup hot or cold. Its flavor is brighter if you use very fresh, young peas. The starchiness of mature peas can give the soup a split-pea flavor, so if you can find only older peas, use frozen instead. For a vegetarian variation, use pea broth (see the tip at left) instead of the chicken broth and water.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
½ cup coarsely chopped shallots
1 tsp. minced garlic
4 cups fresh shelled peas (3½ to 4 lb. unshelled) or frozen peas
2 cups lower-salt chicken broth
½ cup chopped fresh mint
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Pinch granulated sugar (optional)
½ cup heavy cream
Finely grated zest of one-half medium lemon

Melt the butter in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until both are very soft, 6 to 8 minutes. They shouldn't brown. If they're cooking too fast, reduce the heat to medium low.

Add the peas, broth, half of the mint, and 2 cups water. Season generously with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer vigorously until the peas are very tender, 8 to 10 minutes. In batches, purée the soup in a blender until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If the peas weren't very sweet, stir in the sugar.

Pour the heavy cream into a medium bowl and whip it to soft peaks with a whisk. Fold in the lemon zest and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Ladle the soup into serving bowls and top with a generous spoonful of the lemon cream. Scatter the remaining chopped mint over the soup and serve. If you choose to serve the soup cold, chill it in the fridge but take it out 15 minutes before you serve. Adjust the seasoning if necessary before serving.



In a pinch, use frozen peas

If you can't find good fresh peas or you crave peas when the season's over, frozen peas are a terrific alternative. They're usually picked when they're young and tender and immediately frozen, so they will often taste sweeter than fresh peas that have been hanging around for too long. You can use frozen peas in all these recipes if sweet fresh ones aren't available.

Pea & Shrimp Penne with Basil

Serves four.

While I like to use penne for this dish, you can use other short pastas like rigatoni or ziti.

1½ lb. shrimp (21 to 25 per lb.), peeled, deveined, and cut in half lengthwise
½ cup chopped fresh basil
5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbs. finely grated lemon zest
Kosher salt
1½ cups fresh shelled peas (about 1½ lb. unshelled) or frozen peas
¾ lb. dried penne
Freshly ground black pepper
⅓ cup finely diced shallots
1 tsp. minced garlic
¾ tsp. seeded and minced hot fresh chile, such as Thai bird or serrano
2 oz. arugula, trimmed, washed, and dried (about 2 lightly packed cups)

Toss the shrimp with half of the basil, 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, and the lemon zest. Cover and refrigerate for about 30 minutes.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Put the peas in a large metal sieve and dip them into the boiling water. Cook until just tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Lift the sieve from the water, let the peas drain, and then spread them on a baking sheet in a single layer to cool.

Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook, following the package directions, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup of the cooking water and drain the pasta.

Meanwhile, take the shrimp out of the fridge and season them lightly with salt and pepper. Heat the remaining 3 Tbs. oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the shallots, garlic, chile, and a pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are soft and lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Add the shrimp and continue to cook, stirring, until the shrimp have turned pink and are almost cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the peas and remove from the heat.

Return the drained pasta to its pot and add the shrimp mixture and 2 Tbs. of the pasta water. Cook over medium heat until the shrimp are completely cooked through, about 1 minute more. Toss the arugula and the remaining basil into the pasta. Add more pasta water as necessary to keep the pasta moist and continue tossing until the arugula is wilted, about 1 minute. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

Annie Wayte is the chef at New York City's Nicole's and 202. She's also the author of the book Keep It Seasonal: Soups, Salads, and Sandwiches. ♦



classic

Spaghetti alla Carbonara

To make this rich, creamy pasta all you need is cured pork, cheese, and eggs

BY STEVE CONNAUGHTON

I wish I had a great story about how I learned to cook spaghetti alla carbonara, a classic Roman pasta—a story about an Italian grandmother in a small restaurant outside Rome who took me under her wing and taught me the recipe her mother had taught her. Or maybe I could tell you about my family vacation to Italy during my childhood, when we ate at all the best trattorias, and my love for this heavenly pasta drove me to become a chef.

Unfortunately, the real story is not as sexy. I grew up eating like most American kids, and like most American chefs, I learned to cook by spending long hours in hot, windowless kitchens here in the United States. But when I started working at Lupa, a Roman-style restaurant in New York, I had a chance to cook with some amazing chefs who knew a lot about Italian food (and I finally got to go to Rome, too). That's when I learned all the carbonara secrets contained in these pages.

Classic spaghetti alla carbonara is as simple to make as it is tasty to eat. There are really only four basic ingredients that go into it: pasta, cheese, eggs, and pork—usually in the form of guanciale (see the sidebar at far right) or pancetta—although a few generous grinds of black pepper and some nicely browned onions give it a more complex flavor. You'll notice

that there is no heavy cream in this recipe. That's because traditional carbonara gets its creaminess only from the emulsification of eggs, fat, and water, with a little help from the cheese.

The key to a creamy carbonara is to prevent the eggs from scrambling. The crucial moment in making carbonara is at the very end, after the pork is cooked, the onions browned, and the pasta boiled. This is when you really need to pay attention, because you're adding raw eggs to hot pasta in a hot pan, and you don't want to scramble the eggs. Your final sauce should have the consistency of a thin custard that coats the spaghetti. Luckily, it's easy to achieve this smooth texture with just a few simple steps.

First, make sure the bottom of the pan is a little wet before you pour in the eggs. Adding a couple of teaspoonfuls of pasta water will do the trick. If the pan is too dry, the eggs will immediately set if they touch its hot surface.

Toss the pasta constantly when you add the eggs. Take the pan off the heat and keep tossing the pasta until the eggs begin to thicken and turn to a thin, smooth custard. Stirring helps reduce contact with the hot pan and aerates the eggs, keeping them from curdling, while the heat of the pan and of the pasta cooks the eggs through.





Spaghetti alla Carbonara

Serves two.

If you'd like to make this pasta for four people, double the recipe, but transfer the pasta back into the pot used for cooking it and then toss it with the eggs and cheese.

Kosher salt

1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

**4 oz. fatty pancetta or guanciale, sliced
¼ inch thick and cut into 1½ x ½-inch
rectangles**

Freshly ground black pepper

½ cup diced red onion

2 large eggs, chilled

**½ lb. imported dried spaghetti (I like
Setaro brand; for sources, see p. 84)**

**½ cup lightly packed, freshly grated
Parmigiano-Reggiano**

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

In a 10-inch skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the pancetta or guanciale and ½ tsp. pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden and beginning to crisp, about 5 minutes. (If the meat is browning too quickly, reduce the heat to medium low.) Add the onion and continue to cook until it's soft and golden and the meat is crisp, about 5 minutes more.

Remove the pan from the heat and carefully spoon off all but about 2 Tbs. of the fat. Add 1 Tbs. water to the pan and scrape any brown bits from the bottom.

Beat the eggs in a small bowl until smooth and set aside.

Cook the spaghetti in the boiling water according to package directions until it's just shy of al dente. Reserve ¼ cup of the cooking water and drain the spaghetti. Transfer the spaghetti to the skillet, set it over medium heat, and toss with tongs to



Add enough pasta water to prevent the bottom of the pan from becoming dry; the eggs will scramble in a dry pan.



Pour the eggs over the pasta and keep tossing until the eggs thicken into a custard-like consistency.

coat the spaghetti with the fat and finish cooking to al dente, about 1 minute. If the pasta is too dry or starts to stick to the bottom of the pan, add 1 or 2 tsp. of the pasta water. You want the bottom of the pan to be just barely wet. If the pan is too dry, the eggs will scramble when you add them.

Remove the skillet from the heat and pour the eggs over the pasta, tossing quickly and continuously until the eggs thicken and turn to the consistency of a thin custard, 30 seconds to 1 minute. (Tossing constantly is important, as it prevents the eggs from scrambling.)

The sauce should be smooth and creamy, and it should cling to the pasta. Add a little more pasta water if necessary to loosen the sauce. Stir in the Parmigiano and season to taste with salt and pepper (you may not need additional salt, as both guanciale and pancetta can be very salty). Serve immediately.

Until recently, Steve Connaughton was the executive chef at New York's Lupa. He will be the chef at a new northern Italian restaurant opening in New York this spring. ♦

Traditionally, carbonara is made with guanciale

In Italy, classic spaghetti alla carbonara is made with guanciale (gwan-CHA-leh)—cured, air-dried pork that's similar to pancetta. But pancetta comes from the belly of the pig, while guanciale is made from the jowl and has a stronger pork flavor and a more delicate texture. Pancetta is a perfectly good substitute in this recipe, but guanciale's richer, deeper flavor makes it worth seeking out. Guanciale can be hard to find in the U.S., but you can easily order it online (see Where to Buy It, p. 84, for sources).



Make the Most of Garlic's Two Personalities



Garlic basics

Buying: Choose firm heads of garlic with tight, unblemished skin. Avoid heads that have sprouted or that have soft or shriveled cloves. They're past their prime. Also, stay away from peeled cloves. They won't last long without the protection of their papery skins.

Storing: Keep whole heads of garlic in a dark, cool, dry place for up to two months. Once broken into individual cloves, the garlic will last about two weeks. Don't store your garlic in the refrigerator, as the moist air encourages mold.

Depending on how you cook it, garlic can be mellow and delicate or punchy and assertive

BY JENNIFER McLAGAN

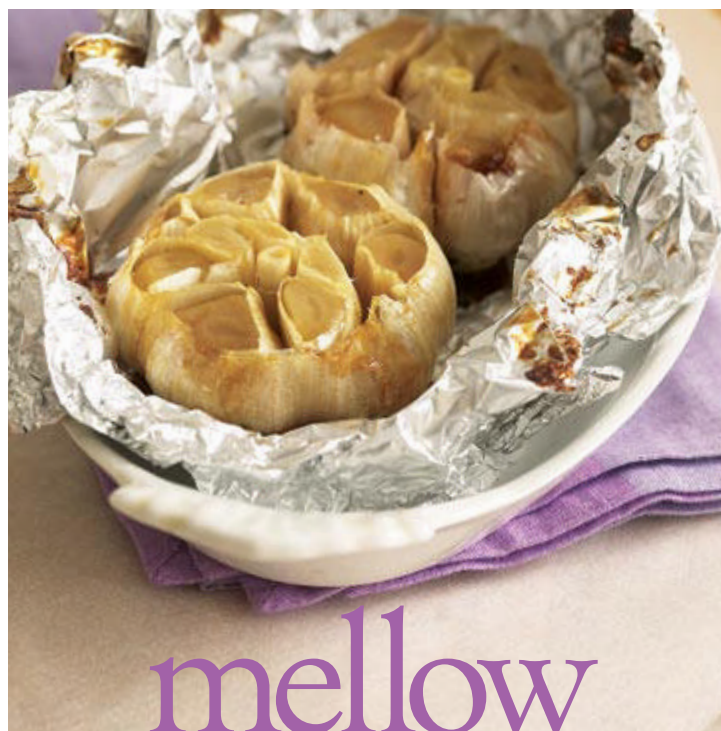
If I had to catalog the ingredients always on hand in my kitchen, garlic would be near the top of the list. I can't imagine cooking without it. In fact, I'm here to defend garlic from its infamous reputation for being too strong a flavor, leaving bad breath in its wake. The truth is that when cooked correctly, garlic can be mild and sweet or assertive and pungent—whichever way you like it. If you keep a few key principles in mind, it's easy to control garlic's intense flavor, with delicious results.

Garlic's wild side flares up when it's broken down. Pick up a head of garlic and take a good sniff: There is no smell. It's not until you cut into garlic that it begins to give off its heady aroma. The more you chop it, the stronger the flavor and scent become, as sulfuric compounds and essential oils are released into the air—and into your cooking. So if you want to show off garlic's robust side in your recipes, use minced, puréed, or mashed raw garlic. My rich garlic-rosemary butter is a good example. I mash coarse salt and raw garlic into a paste so it breaks down completely and intensely flavors the butter. It's perfect if you're a true garlic lover like me.

Cooking garlic for a short time tames some of its fire but keeps lots of good taste in your finished dish. Quickly sautéing or infusing garlic will add lots of piquant garlic notes to your food without the characteristic sharpness. If this is how you

like your garlic—punchy and aromatic—then the garlicky shrimp appetizer I've included here is for you. I like to treat shrimp to a double dose of garlic with an infused oil and gently cooked garlic slices. Then I temper the dish with fresh basil, wine, and lemon zest. Crusty bread is essential for mopping up the tangy sauce.

Braise or roast whole garlic cloves, and their flavor mellows and sweetens. The longer and slower you cook garlic, the milder its flavor becomes as the sulfuric compounds dissipate. If you want to highlight garlic's sweet side, this is the way to do it. I love slow-roasting whole heads of garlic with a touch of olive oil. The cloves soften and are easy to squeeze from their skins to add gentle caramelized garlic flavor to any dish you like. Braising garlic cloves yields similar sweet results, as you'll see if you try the chicken recipe on p. 62. Using 40 cloves of garlic sounds like a lot, but the finished dish is mellow because the braised garlic perfumes the meat and infuses the sauce without overwhelming it. As a bonus, you can squeeze the butter-soft garlic onto slices of toasted baguette as an accompaniment to the meal. For another take on garlic's mild side, try making mellow garlic mashed potatoes by boiling the garlic cloves with the potatoes. Then mash them together with butter for subtle, creamy garlic flavor.



mellow

Roasted Garlic

Yields about 1/2 cup.

Slow-roasting whole heads of garlic with a drizzle of oil concentrates the flavors and adds a caramelized note that enhances garlic's natural sweetness.

2 whole heads garlic
2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil

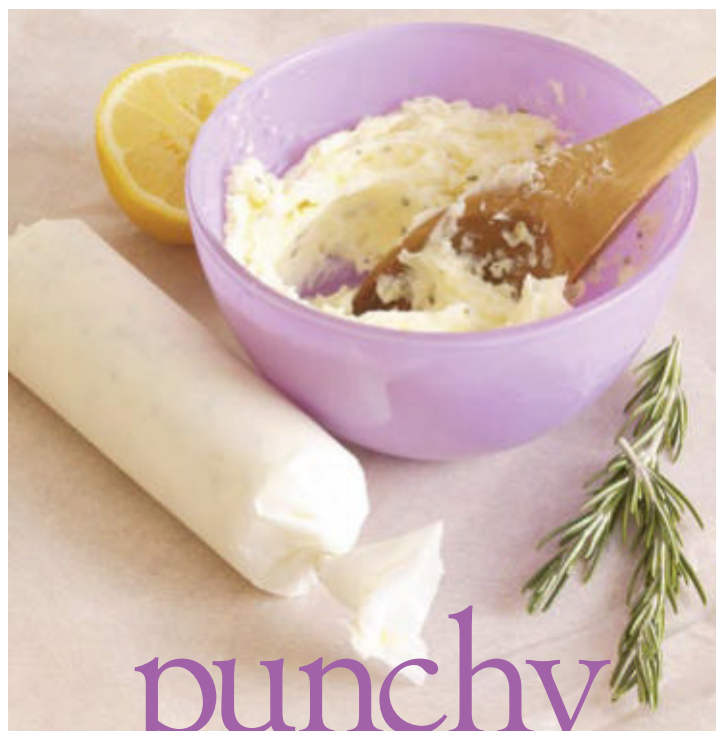
Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Remove any loose papery skin from the heads of garlic, taking care to leave the heads intact and the cloves covered. Slice 1/2 inch off the top of each head to expose the cloves; discard the tops. Put the heads in the center of a large piece of aluminum foil and drizzle with the oil. Gather the foil around the garlic in a pouch and put the pouch in a small baking dish (in case the oil leaks). Roast until the garlic is completely soft and golden brown, 70 to 80 minutes. Let cool briefly and then push the soft garlic from the skin.

What to do with roasted garlic

Stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator, roasted garlic will keep for a week. Here are some great ways to use it:

- ❖ Stir into mashed potatoes or cooked vegetables.
- ❖ Use as a spread for sandwiches.
- ❖ For a delicious, quick appetizer, spread onto crackers topped with soft goat cheese and cherry tomato halves.
- ❖ Spread onto toasted baguette slices to make easy croutons for soup.
- ❖ Stir into the drippings from a roast for a savory gravy.
- ❖ Whisk into a vinaigrette to use on a hearty salad.



punchy

Garlic-Rosemary Butter

Yields 1/2 cup.

Chartreuse is a French herbal liqueur produced by monks. It's optional in this recipe, but it adds a lovely floral note to the rich, garlicky butter.

2 large or 4 small cloves garlic (1/2 oz.)
Kosher salt
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. green Chartreuse (optional)
1/2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
8 Tbs. unsalted butter, at room temperature
Freshly ground black pepper

Peel the garlic cloves, halve them lengthwise, remove the germs (see p. 60), and coarsely chop the cloves. Sprinkle with 1 tsp. salt. Using the flat side of a chef's knife, smear and mash the garlic and salt together to form a smooth paste. You should have about 2 tsp. garlic paste.

Transfer the garlic paste to a small bowl. Add the lemon juice, Chartreuse (if using), and rosemary. Stir to combine. Add the butter and mash together with a fork until completely incorpo-

What to do with garlic butter

Here are some ideas beyond garlic bread for using this vividly flavored spread:

- ❖ Melt and use as a sauce for grilled meats and fish.
- ❖ Spread on sourdough bread and top with roast beef for a tasty sandwich.
- ❖ Toss with steamed vegetables.
- ❖ Mix into freshly cooked rice or pasta.
- ❖ Garnish a hot baked potato.
- ❖ Melt and toss with bread cubes and then toast to make croutons.

rated. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Use immediately or use parchment, waxed paper, or plastic wrap to shape the garlic butter into a log, twisting the ends as if it were a sausage. Refrigerate until ready to use. The butter will keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for up to 1 month.



mellow

Creamy Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Yields about 3 cups; serves four.

It might seem like this recipe calls for a lot of garlic and very few potatoes, but boiling and mashing them together with butter and cream delivers just the right amount of mellow garlic flavor.

5 oz. garlic cloves (25 to 30 large cloves), blanched and peeled (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)

3 medium Yukon Gold potatoes (about 1½ lb.), peeled and halved
One-half dried or 1 fresh bay leaf
Kosher salt

¼ cup light cream or whole milk

4 Tbs. unsalted butter, at room temperature

Freshly ground black pepper

Cut the garlic cloves in half lengthwise and remove the germs. Put the

potatoes and garlic in a 3-quart saucepan. Add the bay leaf, 1 tsp. salt, and enough cold water to cover the potatoes by about 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low, partially cover the pot, and simmer until the potatoes are very tender when pierced with a fork but not falling apart, about 20 minutes.

Drain in a colander; discard the bay leaf. Add the light cream (or milk) and butter to the warm pan. Pass the potatoes and garlic through a ricer or the finest disk of a food mill directly into the pan. Set the pan over low heat and stir until combined and heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve immediately or keep warm for up to 1 hour in a heat-proof bowl covered tightly with foil and set over a saucepan of barely simmering water.



Get rid of the germ

The sprout in the center of each garlic clove is known as the germ. When the garlic is fresh, the germ is tiny and pale in color. As garlic ages, the germ grows and turns green, becoming bitter and hard to digest. So always remove the germ, especially in recipes that call for raw or quickly cooked garlic.





punchy

Garlicky Shrimp with Basil

Serves eight as an appetizer.

This recipe gets a double punch of garlic from infused garlic oil and gently cooked garlic slices, but it seems to be the perfect amount once you taste it. Make sure to serve it with lots of crusty bread for polishing off the flavorful juices. You can bake the shrimp in one large baking dish or in individual servings.

⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil
6 to 8 large cloves garlic (1½ oz.),
halved lengthwise, peeled, germs
removed, and sliced ⅛ inch thick
1½ lb. shrimp (20 to 25 per lb.,
about 32), peeled, deveined,
and patted dry
⅓ cup dry white wine
Kosher salt and freshly ground
black pepper
¼ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

Put the oil and garlic in a small (8-inch) skillet and set over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic just begins to turn golden, 8 to 12 minutes. Strain the garlic and oil through a sieve set over a bowl; spread the garlic slices on a paper-towel-lined plate to drain.

Put the shrimp in a gratin or baking dish that is about 7x9 inches. Pour the garlic oil and wine over the shrimp and season with 1 tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper.

Roast, stirring once, until the shrimp are pink, opaque, and cooked through, 8 to 12 minutes. Sprinkle the garlic slices, basil, and lemon zest over the shrimp, stir to combine, and serve immediately.

Cooking garlic quickly tames its fire but keeps lots of great flavor in your finished dish.

punchy

Spaghetti with Garlic & Spinach

Serves four.

Quickly cooking the garlic over low heat draws out some of its pungency, leaving behind lots of garlicky taste without the bite.

Kosher salt
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
6 to 8 large cloves garlic (1½ oz.),
halved lengthwise, peeled, germs
removed, and thinly sliced
10 oz. baby spinach (10 loosely
packed cups)
Freshly ground black pepper
1 lb. dried spaghetti
1 cup (about 2 oz.) freshly grated
Parmigiano-Reggiano

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil.

Combine the oil and garlic in a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat.

Cook, stirring often, until the garlic becomes fragrant and is just beginning to turn golden, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the spinach, ½ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper and cook, tossing gently with tongs, until the spinach begins to wilt, 2 to 3 minutes more. Remove from the heat.

Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti in the boiling salted water, stirring occasionally, until it's just tender to the tooth (see the package for cooking time). Reserve 1 cup of the cooking water and drain the pasta.

Return the skillet to medium heat. Add the drained pasta and ½ cup of the reserved cooking water. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, tossing and stirring to combine and blend the flavors. If the pasta isn't tender or seems dry, add the remainder of the cooking water and continue to cook and stir until done. Toss with the cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.



mellow

Braised Chicken with 40 Cloves of Garlic

Serves four.

Don't let all the garlic in this recipe scare you. Braising the chicken and garlic together yields tender, juicy chicken and mellow, soft garlic cloves. Spreadable and quite sweet, the garlic is great squeezed out of its skin onto baguette slices for mopping up the aromatic sauce.

3½- to 4-lb. chicken

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

One-half lemon

¼ tsp. sweet Hungarian paprika

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

40 cloves unpeeled garlic, separated and any loose papery skins removed (about 2 large heads)

½ cup dry white wine

2 sprigs fresh thyme

2 sprigs fresh rosemary

2 sprigs fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 cup lower-salt chicken broth

Toasted baguette slices for serving

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Trim any excess fat from the cavity of the chicken. Pat the chicken very dry

and season inside and out with 2 tsp. salt and 1 tsp. pepper. Squeeze the juice from the lemon half and set the juice aside. Put the juiced lemon half in the chicken's cavity. Cross the chicken legs and tie them together; tuck the wings under the chicken. Using a small sieve, dust the breasts and legs with the paprika.

Heat the oil in a 3- to 4-quart Dutch oven (large enough to fit the chicken snugly) over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, breast side down, and cook until the skin is browned, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook the back and sides until browned, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a plate and pour off and discard the oil left in the pot.

Return the pot to medium-high heat. Add the garlic and wine to the pot, stirring to deglaze the browned bits from the bottom. Return the chicken to the pot, setting it breast side up on top of the garlic. Add the herbs to the pot, pour the broth over the chicken, and bring to a boil. Cover and transfer the pot to the oven. Cook, basting the chicken every 20 minutes, until an instant-read ther-

mometer inserted in the thigh registers 160°F, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Uncover and continue to cook the chicken until the thermometer registers 165° to 170°F in the thigh and the juices from the thigh run clear when the thermometer is removed, about 10 minutes more. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and the garlic cloves to a serving platter; cover both loosely with foil to keep warm.

Strain the braising liquid from the pot into a small saucepan; discard the herbs. Tilt the pan so the juices collect in one corner and spoon off and discard as much of the fat as possible. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Simmer until reduced to ¾ cup, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and some of the reserved lemon juice.

Carve the chicken and transfer the pieces to the serving platter with the garlic. Serve with the sauce and the baguette slices.

*Jennifer McLagan is a chef, food stylist, and author whose first cookbook, *Bones*, won a James Beard award in 2006. ♦*

Sweet, Crisp Baklava

Is an Impressive One-Pan Dessert

Made with phyllo dough, nuts, and a simple syrup, this make-ahead dessert is great for entertaining

BY CINDY MUSHET

As a pastry chef, I'm often responsible for bringing dessert to whatever gathering I'm attending, whether it's an office party, school function, or neighborhood get-together. Baklava is my ace in the hole for these occasions. Made with sweetened layers of crisp, buttery phyllo and bursting with toasted nuts, this seductive eastern Mediterranean dessert somehow manages to be flaky, moist, and crunchy all at the same time. It's also practical, because it's easy to assemble, feeds a crowd, and can be made ahead—all important qualities for time-crunched bakers. But one of the best reasons for making baklava is that it's an entirely unexpected addition to the dessert table.

If you've ever had commercially made baklava, you might not be inclined to make it yourself, because most of what you buy is sodden and ultrasweet. But you should know that the homemade version is light years better than the commercial one and not complicated to make. While it does take some time, nearly all of it is hands-off time, waiting for the phyllo to thaw (see the sidebar on p. 65), the pastry to bake, or the baklava to absorb moisture from the syrup. And the method is easy—just keep the following tips in mind.

Use a food processor to chop the nuts. Traditionalists claim that chopping the nuts (pistachios, in this recipe) by hand is best, but if that were the only option, I'd probably never make baklava again. Luckily, the food

processor does a perfectly good job in only a few seconds. Just take care not to overchop the nuts to a powder, or worse, to pistachio butter. Process the nuts with the sugar and spices for the filling; the sugar absorbs the oil released by the nuts, keeping them separate and fluffy instead of oily and pasty.

For this recipe, I use three thin layers of nut filling, whereas many classic baklavas have just one layer in the center of the pastry. Thinner nut layers give you a flakier texture (the bottom layers aren't weighted down by one large body of nuts), a more robust nut flavor (thinner layers get toasted more evenly), and more evenly absorbed syrup.

The syrup should be hot when poured over the cooled pastry. There's one rule for adding sugar syrup to baklava: The temperature of the pastry must be opposite that of the syrup. I had always been advised to pour cold syrup over hot-from-the-oven pastry. But the baklava was never quite as crisp as I wanted; the hot pastry absorbed the syrup readily and softened quickly. So I decided to try pouring hot syrup over cooled pastry, which worked beautifully. Letting the pastry cool and settle kept the layers separate and crisp, even after adding the syrup.



Classic Baklava

Yields about 30 pieces.

1-lb. “twin pack” phyllo dough (two 8-oz. packs, each containing about twenty 9x14-inch sheets)

FOR THE FILLING:

1 lb. unsalted shelled pistachios or almonds, preferably raw

½ cup granulated sugar

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. ground cardamom

10 oz. (1¼ cups) unsalted butter

FOR THE SYRUP:

1½ cups granulated sugar

1½ tsp. orange flower water (optional; see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72)

Thaw the phyllo overnight in the refrigerator. Then put the phyllo box on the counter to come to room temperature, 1½ to 2 hours.

1 Make the filling: Put the pistachios, sugar, cinnamon, and cardamom in a food processor. Process until the nuts are finely chopped (the largest should be the size of small dried lentils), 15 to 20 seconds. Set aside.

Assemble the baklava: Unfold one pack of the phyllo sheets and stack them so that they lie flat on your work surface. Cover the top with plastic wrap, letting some excess plastic fall over all four edges. Dampen and wring out a kitchen towel and drape it on top of the plastic wrap; this will hold the plastic in place and prevent the phyllo from drying out.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Brush the bottom of a 9x13-inch metal pan (prefer-

ably with straight sides and a light-color interior to prevent overbrowning on the edges) with some of the butter. Remove a sheet of phyllo from the stack, re-cover the rest (be sure to cover the remaining sheets each time you remove a new one), and put the sheet in the bottom of the pan. **2** Brush the sheet with some of the melted butter but don't soak the phyllo (remember, you'll have about 40 layers of buttered phyllo by the time you're done). Repeat until you have layered and buttered about half the sheets from the first pack—about 10 sheets in all. If your pan has slightly angled sides, arrange the sheets so the excess falls on the same side of the pan and cut the extra off every few layers with a paring knife. **3** Sprinkle about one-third of the filling evenly over the phyllo.

Repeat layering and buttering the remaining sheets from the first pack and sprinkle on another third of the filling. Open, unfold, and cover the second pack of phyllo. Layer and butter it as described above, sprinkling the remaining filling after layering about half the phyllo, and ending with a final layer of phyllo (you may not need all of the butter). Cover loosely and put the pan of baklava in the freezer for 30 minutes (this makes it much easier to cut the pastry).

Bake the baklava: Position an oven rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

4 Before baking, use a thin, sharp knife (I prefer serrated) and a gentle sawing motion to cut the baklava on the diagonal at

1½-inch intervals in a diamond pattern. Try not to compress the pastry by pressing down on it with one hand while cutting with the other. Not only are you cutting serving portions, you are also cutting pathways for the flavored syrup to permeate the pastry, so be sure to cut the pastry all the way to the bottom of the pan. If you have an electric carving knife, this is the perfect time to use it.

Bake the baklava until golden, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool completely. If making one of the variations below, run a knife along the cut lines. (Both variations contain sticky ingredients that can seal the cuts shut during baking, making it difficult for the syrup to be absorbed evenly.)

Make the syrup: Put the sugar and ⅔ cup water in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar is dissolved and the liquid is clear, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the orange flower water (if using). **5** Pour the syrup evenly over the entire surface of the baklava, allowing it to run down into the cut marks and along the sides of the pan. Allow the baklava to cool to room temperature before serving.

Note: The baklava is at its best about 24 hours after the syrup is added. It will keep at room temperature for up to 5 days, though the texture changes from flaky and crisp to more solid and crystallized as time goes by. Both textures are delicious and have their fans.

Add a flavor twist

Once you've tried your hand at the classic version, try one of the variations here. In them, I've blended nuts with ingredients like dried fruit, chocolate, liqueur, and espresso. While not traditional, these are easily the most popular baklavas I've ever made.

Apricot & Pistachio Baklava with Orange-Cardamom Syrup

Follow the recipe for Classic Baklava, but make the filling with 12 oz. (2½ cups) raw pistachios, 12 oz. (2 cups, packed) dried apricots (use California apricots for a tart, pronounced apricot flavor or Turkish apricots for a sweeter, mellow flavor; see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72, for more), and ½ cup granulated sugar. You might need to pulse or process the filling a bit longer, as the dried apricots take a little extra time to break down.

Make the syrup with 1½ cups granulated sugar, ⅔ cup orange juice (preferably freshly squeezed), and 1½ tsp. ground cardamom.



Hazelnut & Chocolate Baklava with Espresso-Frangelico Syrup

Follow the recipe for Classic Baklava, but make the filling with 1 lb. raw hazelnuts (or almonds), 6 oz. coarsely chopped semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate, ¼ cup granulated sugar, and

2 tsp. ground cinnamon. You might need to process the filling a bit longer, depending on how coarsely you've chopped the chocolate.

Make the syrup with 1½ cups granulated sugar, ⅔ cup water, and 2 tsp. instant espresso powder. Add 2 Tbs. Frangelico (or amaretto if you're using almonds) just before pouring the syrup over the baklava.





1 Make the nut filling.



3 Spread the filling.



5 Pour the hot syrup over the cooled baklava.



2 Butter the phyllo.



4 Cut through the layers in a diamond pattern.

Phyllo pointers

Phyllo dough is available in the frozen food section of the supermarket, usually near the puff pastry. Here's how to coax the best from a box.

❖ **When shopping for phyllo, always buy extra.** Sometimes, the dough thaws along the route from the factory to your shopping cart, and thawed and refrozen phyllo sheets tend to stick together, ripping and tearing unmercifully as you try to pry them apart. That's why I buy an extra box—even if the dough is in bad shape, I can always get enough sheets from the two boxes to finish the baklava. (If I don't use the second box, it'll keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.) Also, always choose boxes from the back of the freezer case, where the temperature is more constant.

❖ **Put frozen phyllo in the refrigerator overnight so it can thaw gradually.** When phyllo is thawed at room temperature, moisture condenses on it, which can cause the sheets to stick together. Once thawed in the fridge, let the phyllo come to room temperature on the counter for 1½ to 2 hours before using, which will make it less likely to crack.

❖ **Keep the phyllo covered.** The dough dries out quickly and becomes brittle when exposed to the air. To prevent this, I lay the phyllo sheets on a work surface and cover the stack with a piece of plastic wrap several inches larger than the phyllo. Then I drape a damp towel over the plastic. The towel shouldn't come in direct contact with the phyllo, or the sheets will get soggy. It is there to hold the plastic wrap in place and keep air away from the dough.

Cindy Mushet is a pastry chef, teacher, and the author of The Art and Soul of Baking, which will be published late this summer. ♦

One Great Pizza Dough



**Classic Margherita Pizza
with fresh mozzarella
and fresh basil**

BY PETER REINHART

I believe there are only two kinds of pizzas: good and great—and by great I mean memorable. As any passionate pizza lover will tell you, it all begins with the crust, which must be crisp, slightly chewy, and full of yeasty flavor. Yet, while it is one of the food wonders of the world, pizza crust is really just a type of bread dough. I've developed a recipe that is easy to make and versatile enough to turn the simplest of ingredients into a great meal in the form of pizza, calzones, or stromboli.

These variations on a pizza theme are more about the way you shape the dough

than they are about using different ingredients. In fact, whether baked flat for pizza, folded over for calzones, or spiraled for stromboli, the dough and toppings remain largely the same. This means that once you've mastered one dough recipe, you can have a lot of fun deciding which toppings or fillings to use. I've included some of my classic favorites, but the flavors you create are limited only by your imagination, as long as you follow my basic guidelines.

What separates a good crust from a great crust is long, slow fermentation, preferably overnight in the refrigerator, to unlock hidden depths of flavor. It may seem a contradiction to require anything long and slow in

a recipe touted as easy. But all that flavor development occurs in the refrigerator, so you can mix the dough up to three days ahead and then forget about it. Before baking, you just need to let the dough warm up at room temperature for about 1½ hours.

This dough is easy to shape however you want. I don't call for any air-tossing gymnastics when creating pizzas. Instead, I use a method of stretching the dough that creates a thin center with a thicker edge. For a calzone, which is a pizza folded in half, and a stromboli, which is a bit like a savory jelly roll, you roll out the dough with a rolling pin.

With such a delicious crust, this pizza needs little in the way of toppings. Because

That Makes Calzones & Stromboli, Too



tomato sauce is a traditional favorite, I've included a recipe for one made from canned crushed tomatoes. It's a simple no-cook sauce flavored with whatever herbs you like.

Nearly any topping will work for a pizza, from savory to sweet. And any topping that works for a pizza will work in a calzone or a stromboli, with a few adjustments. For instance, because the sauce won't evaporate and thicken in a calzone as it does on a pizza, start with a thicker sauce. In a stromboli, sauce tends to keep the inner dough from cooking, so serve it on the side for dipping instead. Soft "melting" cheeses will shrink dramatically inside a calzone or stromboli and give off oil and moisture, so it is help-

ful to include some other bulky ingredients like vegetables or meats, as long as they are precooked, because otherwise, they will give off moisture as well.

A hot oven is key to getting a crisp crust.

While baking pizza on a heated baking stone in a super hot oven is the best way to deliver a crackly crust, neither calzones nor stromboli require this. All three can be baked on a baking sheet in a home oven with good results.

One taste of this nearly foolproof dough will have you reluctant to resort to take-out or frozen pizzas again. By making the dough ahead and stashing it in the fridge or freezer, you can easily pull together a pizza, calzone, or stromboli exactly the way you want it.



Pizza Dough

Yields 4 individual pizzas or calzones or 2 stromboli, each serving four.

It's best to mix the dough at least a day before you plan to bake. The dough keeps for up to 3 days in the refrigerator or for 3 months in the freezer.

1 lb. (3½ cups) unbleached bread flour; more as needed

2 tsp. granulated sugar or honey

1½ tsp. table salt (or 2½ tsp. kosher salt)

1¼ tsp. instant yeast

1½ Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed

Semolina flour (optional)

Combine the flour, sugar or honey, salt, yeast, and olive oil in a large mixing bowl or in the bowl of an electric stand mixer. Add 11 fl. oz. (1¼ cups plus 2 Tbs.) cool (60° to 65°F) water. With a large spoon or the paddle attachment of the electric mixer on low speed, mix until the dough comes together in a coarse ball, 2 to 3 minutes by hand or 1 to 2 minutes in the mixer. Let the dough rest, uncovered, for 5 minutes.

Knead the dough: If using an electric mixer, switch to the dough hook. Knead the dough for 2 to 3 minutes, either by hand on a lightly floured work surface or with the mixer's dough hook on medium-low speed. As you knead, add more flour or water as needed to produce a ball of dough that is smooth, supple, and fairly tacky but not sticky. When poked with a clean finger, the dough should peel off like a Post-it note, leaving only a slight residue. It may stick slightly to the bottom of the mixing bowl but not to the sides.

Chill the dough: Lightly oil a bowl that's twice the size of the dough. Roll the dough in the bowl to coat it with the oil, cover the top of the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 8 hours and up to 3 days. It will rise slowly in the refrigerator but will stop growing once completely chilled. If the plastic bulges, release the carbon dioxide buildup by lifting one edge of the plastic wrap (like burping it) and then reseal.

To make pizzas, follow the directions at right. To make calzones or stromboli, see pp. 70–71.

To freeze the dough: After kneading the dough, divide it into 4 pieces for pizzas or calzones or 2 pieces for stromboli. Freeze each ball in its own zip-top freezer bag. They'll ferment somewhat in the freezer, and this counts as the rise. Before using, thaw completely in their bags overnight in the fridge or at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours. Then treat the dough exactly as you would regular overnighted dough, continuing with the directions for making pizzas, calzones, or stromboli.



let the dough warm up

Take the dough out of the refrigerator, set it on a lightly oiled work surface, and divide into 4 equal pieces of about 7 oz. each. Roll each piece into a tight ball. Line a baking sheet with parchment and lightly oil it with olive oil or cooking spray. Set each ball at least an inch apart on the parchment. Lightly spray or brush the balls with olive oil and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Let the dough warm up and relax at room temperature for 1½ to 2 hours.

get ready to make pizza

If you have a baking stone, put it on the middle rack of the oven. If not, set a rimmed baking sheet upside down on the middle rack to serve as a baking platform. Heat the oven (regular or convection) to its highest setting. Fill a small bowl with bread flour, or semolina if using, and dust a 12-inch-square area of a clean work surface with a generous amount. Prepare a peel for transferring the pizzas to the oven by dusting the peel with bread flour or semolina. (If you don't have a peel, use a rimless cookie sheet or the back of a rimmed baking sheet, also dusted with flour.) Prepare your toppings (see the box at far right for suggestions).

shape the dough

With floured hands, transfer one of the dough balls to the floured work surface. Sprinkle the dough lightly with flour and gently press it with your fingertips into a round disk—you're trying to merely spread the dough, not squeeze all the gas from it.

With floured hands, carefully lift the disk of dough and rest it on the back of your hands and knuckles.



Use the tips of your thumbs and gravity to stretch the outer edge of the dough—you want a thin dough with thicker edges.

See this in action

Watch Peter Reinhart shape pizzas, calzones, and stromboli at finecooking.com



Using the tips of your thumbs, stretch the outer edge as you slowly rotate the dough until it is 10 to 12 inches in diameter (see photo below left). The edge should be the only place where you exert any pressure. If necessary, let the dough hang off one of your hands so that gravity provides some of the stretch. Despite the pressure on the edge, it will remain thicker than the inner section of the dough, which should be nearly paper thin. Don't pull the dough forcefully into a circular shape or it will stretch from the center and possibly rip. If the dough begins to resist and keeps shrinking back into a smaller circle, lay it on the floured work surface and let it rest for about 2 minutes. While it is resting you can begin to stretch and shape another dough ball. Return later to the first dough and finish shaping it.

top the pizza

Lay the shaped pizza dough on the floured peel and top it with sauce, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the outer rim sauce free. Add cheese and other toppings of your choice.

Move the back of a large spoon or small ladle in a circular motion to spread the sauce over the dough.

bake the pizza

Carefully slide the pizza onto the baking stone using a jerking motion to get it to slide. If it sticks to the peel, carefully lift the stuck section and toss a little flour under it. Bake until the edge is puffy and brown with a slight char and the underside is brown and fairly crisp, 5 to 7 minutes (the hotter the oven, the faster and better it will cook). Rotate it after 3 minutes for even browning. Remove the pizza from the oven with either the peel or a long metal spatula and put it on a cutting board. Let it rest for 1 to 2 minutes before serving.

While the first pizza is cooking, repeat with the remaining dough. If you decide not to make all the pizzas, bake any remaining shaped dough as untopped pizza, brushed with olive or garlic oil prior to baking, and serve or save as flatbread.



Pizza topping ideas

Enough for one individual 12-inch pizza.

The key to these pizzas is to use only a small amount of sauce and cheese. Too much sauce will make the dough soggy and too much cheese will make it greasy. See Tasting Panel, p. 82, for information on mozzarella.

Classic Margherita Pizza

For each pizza, you'll need about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup No-Cook Pizza Sauce (p. 71), 2 to 3 oz. sliced fresh mozzarella or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated low-moisture mozzarella, and 4 to 6 large basil leaves, thinly sliced (save the basil for topping the pizza right after it comes out of the oven).

VARIATION: SMOKED CHEESE PIZZA (PIZZA PUGLIESE)

Make as you would a Margherita pizza but substitute smoked mozzarella or smoked Gouda for half of the fresh or low-moisture mozzarella. (Don't use the smoked cheese exclusively, as it will overpower the other toppings.)

Better than Pepperoni Pizza

You can certainly use pepperoni, which is really just an Americanized version of a spicy Italian Calabrese-style salume. But there are a number of excellent Italian cured salami products, including the always popular Genoa salami and various types of garlic and cayenne versions. For these quick-cooking pizzas, use about the same amount of tomato sauce and cheese as in the Margherita but add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup meat. I like to crisp the meat in a dry sauté pan or in the oven first, and then put it under the cheese to keep it from burning.

White Pizza (pizza bianca)

Instead of using tomato sauce, make a topping for each pizza by combining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup whole-milk ricotta, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup grated low-moisture mozzarella or provolone, 1 Tbs. olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. dried or 2 tsp. chopped fresh oregano, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. dried or 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme, and salt and pepper to taste.



making calzones

Calzone filling ideas

For each calzone you'll need $\frac{1}{4}$ cup thick No-Cook Tomato Sauce (recipe at far right), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of a soft melting cheese (such as low-moisture mozzarella, Monterey Jack, provolone, Gouda, smoked mozzarella, or smoked Gouda), up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of any other ingredients you like (such as crumbled cooked sausage or bacon; sautéed or steamed vegetables like onions, broccoli, peppers, mushrooms, artichoke hearts, or garlic; and chopped fresh herbs like basil or parsley), and 1 Tbs. grated dry aged cheese (like Parmigiano-Reggiano, Asiago, or Romano).

make & chill the dough

Prepare a recipe of Pizza Dough, p. 68, and refrigerate it for at least 8 hours.

let the dough warm up

Take the dough out of the refrigerator, set it on a lightly oiled work surface, and divide into 4 equal pieces of about 7 oz. each. Roll each piece into a tight ball. Line a baking sheet with parchment and lightly oil it with olive oil or cooking spray. Set each ball at least an inch apart on the parchment. Lightly spray or brush the balls with olive oil and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Let the dough warm up and relax at room temperature for $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours.

get ready to make calzones

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 500°F (a baking stone is optional). Fill a small bowl with bread flour, or semolina if using, and dust a clean work surface with a generous amount. Prepare your fillings (see above right for suggestions).

shape the dough

With floured hands, transfer one of the dough balls to the floured work surface. Sprinkle lightly with flour and press it with your fingertips into a round disk. With a rolling pin, roll the dough out into an oval or round shape about $\frac{3}{16}$ inch thick and 9 inches across. Dust with flour as necessary to prevent sticking. If the dough resists rolling and springs back, let it rest for a few minutes and move on to the next dough ball. Roll out all the pieces that you plan to make into calzones.

fill the calzones

Brush the edge of a dough round with cool water to make a damp band about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide all the way around. Spread the sauce over the lower half of the dough. Sprinkle the soft melting cheese over the sauce, and then top with your additional filling choices and the dry aged cheese. Fold the top half of the dough over the filling. Crimp the dough either with fingers or a fork, sealing the damp edge tightly. Transfer the calzone to a baking sheet lined with parchment. Repeat with the remaining dough circles. Brush the tops with olive oil, sprinkle lightly with kosher salt (optional), and cut three steam vents in each.



Vents allow steam to escape so that it doesn't build up and burst the crimped edge of the calzone.

bake the calzones

Put the baking sheet in the oven (on the baking stone, if using) and reduce the oven temperature to 450°F. Bake until the crust turns a rich golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool for 3 minutes before serving.



Stromboli filling ideas

For each stromboli you'll need about 1 heaping cup of grated melting cheese; 1 cup of any other ingredients you like, such as salami, crumbled cooked sausage, ham, chopped crisp bacon, sautéed fresh or thawed frozen spinach (squeeze out excess water), chopped par-cooked broccoli, small diced onion, sautéed or roasted garlic, chopped olives or capers; and heated No-Cook Tomato Sauce (recipe below) for dipping.

make & chill the dough

Prepare a recipe of Pizza Dough, p. 68, and refrigerate it for at least 8 hours.

shape & fill the stromboli

Prepare your filling (see above right for suggestions). Take the dough out of the refrigerator. Dust a work surface lightly with flour, or semolina if using, and transfer the dough to the work surface. Dust the dough with flour and press it into a rectangle with your fingertips. Divide the dough in half crosswise. Roll one piece of dough into a larger rectangle, working from the center of the dough to each of the four corners and then to each of the four sides to even out the rectangle, until it is $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. It should be approximately 11 inches long and 14 inches wide, with the wide side facing you. Use more dusting flour as needed.

Cover the surface of a dough rectangle with 1 cup cheese and your additional filling choices, leaving a 1-inch border. Tightly and evenly roll the stromboli from the bottom to the top, pinching the seam tightly closed with fingers or thumbs. Also pinch the two ends closed and tuck them under the loaf.

Repeat with the second piece of dough. Carefully lift the long loaves and put them seam side down on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Brush the top of the loaves with olive oil and loosely cover the pan with plastic wrap.

let the stromboli warm up

Leave the loaves at room temperature for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The dough won't rise very much but will just be showing signs of expansion by the time it's ready to be baked.

bake the stromboli

Heat the oven to 400°F (350°F if using convection). When ready to bake, brush the dough again with olive oil and cut three or four steam vents crosswise into each stromboli with a sharp paring knife, cutting all the way down through the filling to release any air pockets. Bake until the crust turns a rich golden brown, 20 to 30 minutes, rotating the pan after the first 10 minutes for even baking. Let cool for at least 5 minutes before slicing and serving with the heated tomato sauce on the side for dipping.

No-Cook Tomato Sauce for Pizzas, Calzones & Stromboli

Yields $3\frac{1}{4}$ cups.

28-oz. can crushed or ground tomatoes

2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar or lemon juice

Kosher salt or table salt and freshly ground black pepper

OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS:

1 tsp. dried (or 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh)

oregano, basil, marjoram, thyme, or parsley

3 to 5 cloves garlic, minced or pressed (see note)

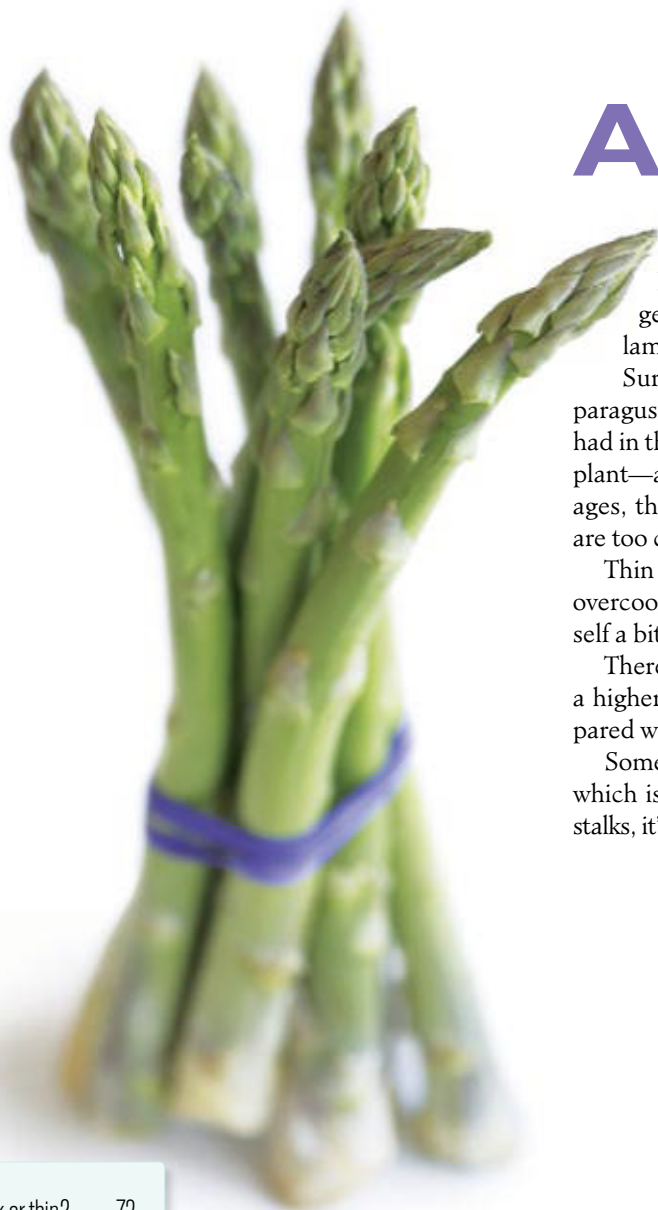
Whisk the tomatoes, vinegar or lemon juice, and any optional ingredients together in a bowl. Add just enough water to thin the sauce so that it is easy to spread. Use thinner sauce for pizza and thicker sauce for stromboli and calzones. Season with salt and pepper.

The sauce can be refrigerated for a week or frozen for up to six months.

Note: If using as a dipping sauce for stromboli, make at least 1 day ahead so that the flavors can meld, but don't add garlic, as the raw garlic flavor will be too strong.

Peter Reinhart is the author of seven books on bread baking, including American Pie: My Search for the Perfect Pizza. ♦

Find a bonus chocolate stromboli recipe as well as dough variations, including whole wheat and cornmeal, at finecooking.com



Asparagus: Is thin still in?

Like models on the runway, it seems that asparagus get thinner and thinner with each spring season. A lamentable trend, really.

Surprised? Consider this: While wispy, pencil-thin asparagus might look nice on a plate, there's more flavor to be had in the fat, meaty spears. Both sizes come from the same plant—a young plant produces fat spears, but as the plant ages, the shoots become thinner and thinner. (Plants that are too close together also tend to produce thinner stalks.)

Thin asparagus do cook in a flash, but they also become overcooked quite suddenly. With fatter stalks, you buy yourself a bit more leeway in the cooking time.

There's a textural difference, too. Thicker asparagus have a higher flesh-to-skin ratio and a more succulent bite compared with thin stalks.

Some recipes will direct you to peel the asparagus stalks, which isn't necessary (or easy) to do on thin stalks. On fat stalks, it's purely a matter of personal preference.

California



Turkish

The dried apricot battle

We've never had such a controversial ingredient in the test kitchen as the humble dried apricot. When we tested the Apricot & Pistachio Baklava variation on p. 64, we made a batch with California apricots (the author's preference) and another with the more common Turkish ones. Everyone loved the baklava overall, but on the subject of the apricots themselves, our tasters were starkly divided.

Those who liked the California apricot version praised the pronounced tang and concentrated

apricot flavor. Those who didn't like the California apricots, though, *really* didn't like them, saying that the flavor seemed "artificial."

On the other hand, tasters who were turned off by the California apricots were big fans of the Turkish ones. With a subtler flavor and less acidity, the baklava was a bit more succulent, and the cardamom flavor more distinct.

It really comes down to your taste—if you prefer a more intense, tangy apricot flavor, seek out California apricots. We bought ours at Trader Joe's, but they're available by mail-order, too (see p. 84). If you want a milder flavor, or you want to spotlight the cardamom a bit more, use Turkish ones. They're widely available at supermarkets.

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BY DABNEY GOUGH



The fish spatula: not just for fish

Out of our test kitchen's huge array of equipment, there's one tool we end up reaching for every day: the fish spatula.

Compared with a regular slotted spatula, a fish spatula has gently curved, thinner, longer, more widely spaced "tines." This design helps the spatula gently slide underneath and cradle a delicate fish fillet.

Often called the "fish spat" by kitchen pros, this tool is useful for far more than its name implies. Its elongated surface lets you transfer cookies, several at a time, from baking sheet to cooling rack. It's also great for flipping grilled cheese sandwiches, especially ones made on oblong bread. When you're pan-frying something like potato pancakes, the wide slots let more oil drain as you move items out of the pan. And if you need to peek under something to tell if it's browning, the wide slots really let you see what's going on.

Fish spatulas are available at any well-stocked cookware store, where they may also be called slotted turners or chef's turners. For a mail-order source, see p. 84.

perfume for food

Orange flower water

If you were to taste the Classic Baklava on p. 64 blindfolded, you'd probably detect a flavor that you couldn't quite put your finger on. That would be the optional orange flower water. Rather than adding true flavor, orange flower water adds a subtle aroma to Middle Eastern desserts and old-school cocktails like the Ramos Gin Fizz.

Straight from the bottle, orange flower water is extremely potent, but it mellows once it's mixed with other ingredients. It's distilled from the flowers and not the oranges themselves, so the aroma is more floral than citrusy.

Look for orange flower water in specialty food markets, gourmet shops, and Middle Eastern grocers, or see p. 84 for a mail-order source.



Easy ways to peel garlic

If you're thinking about making one of the garlic recipes on pp. 58–62, don't be put off by the prospect of peeling all that garlic—there are several ways to get the job done quickly and effortlessly. Start by separating the cloves and pulling off any loose, dry, papery skins. Then try one of the following methods. Each will break and loosen the skins enough to peel off easily.

- ❖ Blanch the cloves in boiling water for about 15 seconds and then shock them in ice water.
- ❖ Put a few cloves in the center of a silicone potholder. Fold the potholder in half and, keeping it on the counter, roll the potholder with the palms of your hands.
- ❖ On a cutting board, position the broad side of a chef's knife on a clove of garlic. Carefully and gently smack the knife with the heel of your hand. You will hear a quiet "crack" when the skin breaks open.
- ❖ Put cloves in a bowl of very hot water and whisk briskly until the skins are loosened.
- ❖ If the recipe calls for chopped or sliced garlic, cut the cloves in half and peel the skins from each half.
- ❖ Put cloves in a small or medium lightweight mixing bowl and then invert another similar bowl over it. Firmly hold the two bowls together and shake vigorously for about 30 seconds.





Fennel pollen: a heavenly spice

If you've never heard of fennel pollen, you're probably not alone, unless you live in Tuscany. It's used frequently there but is fairly obscure everywhere else. Those who do know about it are fanatics, and one whiff will tell you why. It smells like fennel, yes, but it's also flowery and spicy. It's so intoxicating that fennel pollen is said to be the "spice of the angels."

In Tuscany, fennel pollen is often paired with pork, either

before or after cooking. Its anise flavor also goes wonderfully with poultry and fish (in this issue, you'll find it on p. 49, paired with salmon). Try adding fennel pollen to your favorite spice mix or sprinkle a bit onto a finished dish—just a pinch gives a big boost of flavor.

Unless you live near a spice merchant or high-end specialty grocery store, you'll probably need to mail-order fennel pollen (see p. 84 for a source).

Tart, lemony sumac



When we tested the Sear-Roasted Salmon on p. 49, a chorus of surprise echoed throughout the kitchen when we revealed one of the ingredients. "Sumac! Isn't that poisonous?"

Though it is a relative of the poisonous type, the variety used in cooking is perfectly safe, and it adds an unusual flavor to the dish. It's used throughout the Middle East, often as a stand-in for lemon juice. In addition to fish, sumac's tart, astringent flavor marries well with chicken, beef, and even fruit (think apple pie).

In the United States, you're most likely to find the dried burgundy-colored berries already ground into a powder, though occasionally they're sold whole. Look for sumac in Middle Eastern markets, or see p. 84 for a mail-order source.



trick of the trade

Showing your best side

Whenever you sear meat or fish, always begin with the "presentation side," the side that will face up when plated. Although it doesn't make a huge flavor difference, the side that gets browned first usually ends up looking the best. As protein cooks, it stiffens, shrinks, and even changes its shape a bit. The first side to hit the pan is still completely raw and malleable, so much of its surface area will touch the pan directly. Flip it over, though, and the partially cooked second side won't lie on the pan as evenly, plus it'll develop a spotty look due to the brown bits left in the pan from searing the first side.

So how do you know which side should be up? Sometimes the presentation side is obvious: For chicken, it's the side that has or had skin on it. For a fish fillet, it's the side that was closest to the bone (bottom fillet, above), which is more evenly colored than the skin side. On other proteins, like pork chops or steaks, the presentation side is not as obvious. In that case, just start with whichever side is most attractive.

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How to french a rack of lamb

Removing the meat from around the bone ends of a lamb, beef, pork, or veal rib rack—called “frenching”—results in a more elegant, finished look. Though it’s a task often left up to the butcher, it’s actually a pretty cool and uncomplicated technique that’s easy to pull off at home. And learning to do it yourself will make you feel like a real culinary pro. For tools, all you need is a sharp boning knife and a little elbow grease.



1. Make a single, long cut down the length of the meaty side of the rack, positioning the knife perpendicular to the bones 2 to 3 inches from the rib-eye meat. Cut all the way through to the bones.



2. Set the rack on end. Using the long cut as a guide, pierce through the meat between each bone.



3. Starting from the points where you pierced the meat, score the membrane along each bone so the bones can break through the membrane more easily.



4. With your thumbs on the bone side and your fingers on the meaty side, bend the meat back from the bones until the bones come free down to the points where you pierced between them. Use a fair amount of force; in some sections, you may need to use a fingertip to help free the bone from the meat.



5. Remove the flap of meat from the bones—it may come away on its own, or you may need to make a few small cuts to free it completely. If the shoulder blade bone is present, pull it out, too. If any patches of meat or membrane remain on the bones, scrape them off with the knife.



6. Separate and pull off the layer of meat and fat (the fat cap) over the remaining meaty part of the rack, leaving just the layer of fat directly over the rib-eye meat. Discard the meat and fat scraps or save for another use.

—Jennifer Armentrout, senior food editor

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ingredient

Saffron

Saffron has the reputation of being the most expensive spice by weight in the world. Why? Because saffron, which is the stigma (the pollen-receiving part) of a little purple perennial crocus flower, must be gathered by hand during a harvest that lasts just a couple of weeks in the fall, and there are only three stigmas per blossom. It takes about 75,000 flowers to yield a pound of saffron.



How to use it

Fortunately, a little saffron goes a long way. A pinch (about 20 threads) is usually all it takes to impart saffron's distinctive yellow color and vaguely metallic, dried alfalfa hay and bittersweet wildflower-honey flavor. A key ingredient in bouillabaisse and paella, it's especially delicious with seafood, tomatoes, fennel, and lamb.

Liquid helps draw out the flavor and color from saffron, so crumble it directly into broths, sauces, or soups. If using in something less fluid, let it steep in a little hot water for a few minutes first and add the water and saffron to the dish. You can also infuse oil with saffron, as in the Saffron Croutons on p. 42, but the flavor and color won't come though as well as they do in water.

How to buy & store it

Spain and India are renowned for their saffron, but Iran, Greece, Morocco, and Italy harvest saffron, too. The purest saffron consists of all dark red-orange stigmas about ½ inch long. This is sometimes referred to as coupé or cut saffron because the lighter yellow bottom part of the stigma (the style) is removed. It's acceptable for a batch of saffron to have a very short bit of yellow at the base of some of the threads, but watch out for saffron that contains a lot of long yellow threads. These are styles and stamen (the pollen-bearing part of the flower), and they add weight but little flavor.

It's best to purchase small quantities of whole saffron threads, both for freshness and cost benefits. The threads should be dry and brittle. Stored in a sealed container in a dark place, they should last a couple of years before the flavor starts to diminish.

Avoid ground saffron because it is too easily cut with additives such as turmeric, paprika, or safflower. Also beware the small pompom-like blossoms of the safflower, which may be sold as saffron—they impart a little color but no flavor to food.

—Allison Ehri Kreidler, test kitchen associate



Saffron Tomato Sauce with Capers

Yields about 2 cups.

Toss this saffron-scented sauce with pasta, stir it into steamed mussels or clams, or spoon it over sautéed or roasted fish, chicken, lamb, fennel, or cauliflower.

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
One-half small yellow onion,
finely chopped (about ½ cup)
2 large cloves garlic, very thinly
sliced crosswise
30 threads saffron
Pinch crushed red pepper
28-oz. can whole peeled plum
tomatoes (preferably San
Marzano), drained and small
diced (about 2 cups)
2 tsp. capers, rinsed and lightly
chopped
1 small sprig fresh thyme

Pinch sugar
Kosher salt and freshly ground
black pepper
1 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley

Heat the oil in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft but not browned, about 5 minutes. Crumble the saffron into the pan and stir in the crushed pepper. Let cook for about 20 seconds and then add the tomatoes, capers, thyme, sugar, ½ tsp. salt, and several grinds of pepper. Simmer briskly, adjusting the heat as necessary and stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes are softened and the flavors melded, about 15 minutes. Discard the thyme sprig and stir in the parsley. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

—A. E. K. ♦

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Taking Control of Gluten

Learn how to increase or limit this sticky protein for breads and pastries with the best texture

BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

When you see flour on the ingredient list of a baking recipe, one thing's for certain: You're going to have to deal with gluten.

Gluten—the strong, sticky, stretchy protein that forms when wheat flour and water mix—is remarkable stuff. It gives structure to baked goods and helps wheat flour morph into many different foods: al dente pasta, fluffy waffles, crisp pastries, chewy artisan bread. But not every baked good requires the same amount of gluten.

Yeast-raised doughs rely heavily on gluten for structure, so lots of it is welcome. That's why, for example, in the pizza dough recipe on p. 68, author Peter Reinhart takes a few steps to encourage gluten development. He uses unbleached bread flour, which is higher in gluten-forming proteins than all-purpose flour. He adds salt and plenty of water. And he mixes the dough for several minutes.

However, encouraging gluten to form is the last thing you want to do when making chemically leavened baked goods such as cakes, cookies, and scones, as well as flaky or tender pastries. (And if you're like me, you bake these kinds of things far more often than you do yeast breads.) Excess gluten makes biscuits leaden, pancakes rubbery, and piecrusts tough.

Fortunately, limiting gluten is a fairly simple matter. Here are four things you can do.

1 Start with the right flour

Well-stocked supermarkets carry a variety of wheat flours: all-purpose, cake, whole wheat, bread. You might also see flours made from grains other than wheat—rye, rice, corn, oat, buckwheat—but they form little or no gluten, so we won't discuss them here. The various wheat flours, however, all contain gluten-forming proteins, though the quality and quantity of those proteins differ (for amounts, see the table at right). What you're baking should determine which flour you choose.

Bread flour and durum semolina (used for pasta) contain the most protein and form strong, high-quality gluten. These so-called hard flours are ideal for yeast-raised breads and pasta, because the strong gluten gives the heavy dough structure and the finished product a pleasantly chewy texture.

Pastry and cake flours contain less protein and form weaker gluten. With their low levels of weak gluten, these “soft flours” produce a more tender product, so they're usually preferable for cakes, cookies, biscuits, and many pastries.

True to its name, all-purpose flour is a decent choice for almost everything. Though rarely used in bakeries, all-purpose flour has a

middle-of-the-road protein content that allows it to work well in most recipes the home baker would want to make. Sure, cakes made with cake flour might be more tender, and loaves made with bread flour might rise higher, but the differences are subtle.

Whole-wheat flour, by the way, is very high in gluten-forming protein, but it's not the best choice for lofty yeast breads because the shards of bran in the flour tear the strands of gluten, inhibiting its development.

Protein content of wheat flours

Flour contains starch, protein, moisture, and a trace of fat. But protein is what most interests us, as its quantity and quality determine how flour performs. (Percentages are approximate, as every brand of flour is unique.)

Flour	Protein content (%)
Whole wheat, bread, durum semolina	12–15
All-purpose*	9–12
Pastry	8–9
Cake	7–8

*Regional all-purpose flour brands in the South and Pacific Northwest may contain less protein, closer to the amount in pastry flour.



2 Beware of water

Gluten doesn't even exist until flour becomes wet. Water is what coaxes the two wheat proteins glutenin and gliadin to combine and form gluten. So by adding or withholding water from dough or batter, you can encourage or deter gluten's development. When you want to maximize gluten, a moderate amount of water is ideal. But if it's tenderness you're after, you can deny your dough water or drown it—depends what you're making.

Flaky and tender pastry doughs are better off thirsty.

It's not mere fussiness when a pie dough recipe tells you to dribble water into the dough drop by drop; it takes just a little too much water to create excess gluten and a tough piecrust. The same is true with biscuits and scones.

Cake batters and some bread doughs need to drown. Once the gluten in a dough or batter is fully hydrated, adding more moisture actually dilutes and weakens the gluten. In cakes, excess moisture along with low-protein flour and various softening ingredients contributes to tenderness. In artisan breads, excess water weakens the dough's gluten network, resulting in a crumb that has large, appealing holes rather than a fine uniform texture.

4 Understand how other ingredients affect gluten

Fats weaken gluten. Solid fats, oils, and egg yolks coat gluten proteins and prevent them from forming long, strong strands. Ever wondered why shortening is called shortening? Because it shortens gluten.

Fat can also make flour water-resistant. For example, when making tart dough, the first step is to thoroughly work the fat into the flour. Once coated with fat, the flour granules don't absorb much mois-

ture when you add wet ingredients such as eggs, cream, or water. So less gluten is formed, and the tart crust stays tender.

Sugar hinders gluten; salt helps it. Sugar molecules encourage tenderness by attaching to water molecules before they can bind with glutenin and gliadin. Again, no water means no gluten. Salt, on the other hand, makes gluten stickier and stronger.

3 Handle with care

Stirring, kneading, folding, mixing—all these actions help gluten stretch and organize itself into a network. The more you mix, the stronger the gluten becomes.

Yeast doughs generally benefit from ample kneading, which elongates and smooths the gluten strands into a stretchy network that can expand and rise as the yeast ferments and releases gasses.

With many other baked goods, though, overmixing and forming too much gluten is a worry. Piecrusts and biscuits are especially tricky because you need some gluten to provide structure—otherwise the crust will crumble and the biscuits will slump—but it's easy to overdo it and create a tough result. Generally speaking, when tenderness is desired, it's wise to mix briefly and with a light hand. When it comes to piecrusts and biscuits, there's really no substitute for experience. It may take trial and error before you strike the perfect balance between tenderness and strength.

Did you know?

The magic of wheat dough—i.e. its ability to shape-shift into so many different baked goods—lies in the balance of two qualities: plasticity and elasticity. Plasticity allows a modest ball of dough to change its shape, as when it expands into a plump, round loaf, while the dough's elasticity, or tendency to hold its original shape, keeps the loaf from expanding too much and popping like an overinflated balloon.

Kimberly Y. Masibay is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

BY DENISE MICKELSEN

Without question, the ideal melting cheese for the pizzas, stromboli, and calzones on pp. 66–71 is low-moisture mozzarella. Also known as block or “pizza” cheese, low-moisture mozzarella is what you find at your local supermarket and is the cheese pizzerias use for their pies because of its firm, shreddable texture, mild flavor, and meltability. We like it melted on sandwiches and in baked pastas, too.



Shopping for Mozzarella

To compare national brands of both whole-milk and part-skim low-moisture mozzarella, we brought together nine willing *Fine Cooking* tasters. We tasted the cheese in both melted form and straight out of the package, looking for a creamy, milky flavor with just a hint of sourness, a firm texture, and smooth melting capabilities.

Whole-milk and part-skim mozzarella are typically sold in 1-pound plastic-wrapped blocks. **Sorrento** whole-milk mozzarella (\$4.69 per pound) made the grade with our tasters for its rich milkiness, delicate balance of sour and salty notes, and gooey stretchiness when melted. **Polly-O** whole-milk mozzarella (\$4.69 per pound) was a close second for its smooth melt and subtly sweet milk flavor.

Sorrento part-skim mozzarella (\$4.69 per pound) looked and tasted the most like a gourmet fresh mozzarella (see the sidebar at right), with its pale white coloring, fresh milkiness, and moist, stringy texture. It did not melt as well as its whole-milk counterpart, but it would still be a welcome addition to any pizza or calzone. The runner-up for part-skim mozzarella was again **Polly-O** (\$4.69 per pound), which had an appealing string-cheese-like texture and creamy flavor, although some testers found it greasy and thick when melted.

A fresh look at mozzarella

Compare low-moisture mozzarella with fresh and you have two entirely different cheeses. Originally made from the milk of water buffalo, today fresh mozzarella is often made from cows' milk. Its smooth, porcelain-white exterior reveals an intensely milky, creamy interior that practically oozes milk as you bite into it. Mild and delicate, this is a cheese you want to serve simply, with a dressing of extra-virgin olive oil and salt, or in a caprese salad with sliced ripe tomatoes and fresh basil leaves.

Fresh mozzarella is best eaten the day it's made, so we recom-

mend looking for it at Italian markets or cheese shops. It's well worth a trip.

If mail-order is a better bet for you, we suggest trying **Lioni Latticini** fresh mozzarella. It has a delightfully creamy, sweet milk flavor and is as tender and ropey as a good fresh mozzarella should be. You can mail-order Lioni's mozzarella by calling Lioni Direct at 908-687-1515. ♦



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Spring Menu, p. 40

For the Angel Food Cake recipe on p. 45, you'll need a 10-inch angel food cake pan (also called a tube pan) with a removable bottom. To find one, visit Pans.com (888-827-3960), where they sell for \$19.99. If you want to buy liquid egg whites for the cake, look to Eggology.com (888-669-6557). The store locator will point you to a store in your area, or you can purchase in bulk directly from the site.

To mail-order saffron, go to Penzeys.com (800-741-7787), which carries both Indian and Spanish varieties. Prices start at \$8.95 for a 1-gram jar.

Spaghetti alla Carbonara, p. 56

Guanciale (cured pork jowl, pictured below) is available in some Italian markets. To mail-order, look to Salumi Cured Meats, in Seattle; for information, visit Salumicuredmeats.com. Though you can certainly use a supermarket brand of pasta for the carbonara recipe, Steve Connaughton particularly likes Setaro brand spaghetti; it's available at Salumariaitaliana.com (800-400-5916), where 2.2 pounds costs \$10.



From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72

Bulkfoods.com carries both California and organic Turkish apricots; prices start at \$6.69 for 8 ounces and \$5.83 per pound, respectively. For fennel pollen and sumac, see the source under sear-roasting fish, below.

A slotted turner with a curved lip is helpful for many cooking tasks. To buy one, visit Store.lamsonsharp.com/catalog (800-872-6564), where they sell for \$20 to \$30.

For saffron, see the source under Spring Menu, at left.

For orange flower water, see the source under Baklava, below.



Baklava, p. 63

The baklava recipes call for a 9x13-inch metal baking pan that's light colored (which will prevent overbrowning). If you don't have one, try Magic Line's, which sells for \$20.50 at Cheftools.com (866-716-2433). Orange flower water is sold in specialty shops as well as through online stores like Kalustyans.com (212-685-3451), where a 3-ounce bottle is \$5.99.

One Great Pizza Dough, p. 66

Cooking.com (800-663-8810) sells a range of pizza stones (both round and rectangular are fine) as well as sets that include a stone and a dough peel (from \$11.99).

Look for semolina flour (also called pasta flour) in either the baking aisle or the pasta aisle of well-stocked supermarkets.

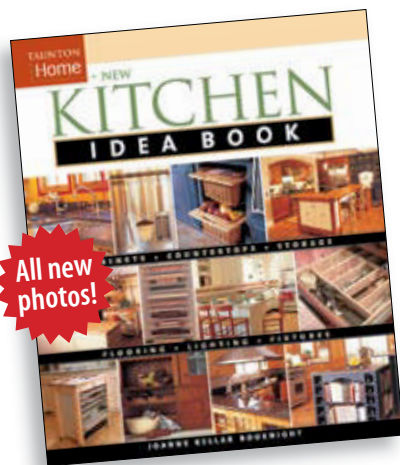
Sear-Roasting Fish, p. 46

Look to Adrianascaravan.com (800-316-0820) for fennel pollen (\$5.95 for 0.35 ounce) and ground sumac (from \$3), as well as five-spice powder (from \$2 for 1 ounce) and mirin (prices start at \$5.95 for 10 ounces). These products are also available in specialty shops and some ethnic markets.

If you're looking for a 12-inch oven-proof skillet, try the CIA Masters Collection 12-inch fry pan; it's \$199.95 at Metrokitchen.com (888-892-9911). ♦

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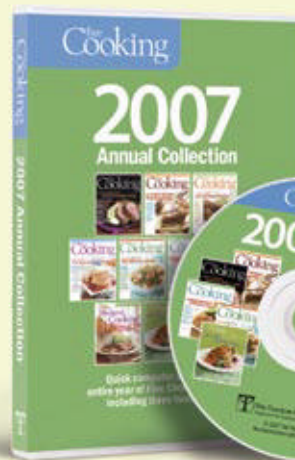
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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
In Season	24												
Fava Bean Purée		90	45	4	10	5	0.5	3.5	0.5	0	35	2	based on 1 Tbs.
Spring Menu	40												
Asparagus Soup with Saffron Croutons		330	280	3	9	32	18	10	1.5	95	400	1	
Rack of Lamb with Mint, Golden Raisin & Pine Nut Relish		490	350	26	10	39	11	19	6	100	290	1	
Cucumber, Fennel & Roasted Potato Salad		210	100	6	22	11	4.5	6	1	10	270	4	
Angel Food Cake with Strawberries & Whipped Cream		290	80	6	46	9	5	2.5	0	35	100	1	
Perfect Fish Fillets	46												
Spice-Rubbed & Sear-Roasted Salmon with Fennel		430	220	40	14	24	3.5	13	6	105	960	4	
Chinese Five-Spice Halibut with Red Pepper & Ginger		310	140	36	6	15	2.5	6	5	55	520	1	
Sear-Roasted Haddock or Cod with Aioli & Breadcrumbs		510	330	34	10	37	5	16	3	105	620	2	
Peas from the Pod	50												
Pea, Butter Lettuce & Herb Salad		190	130	7	8	15	4	7	1	10	360	3	
Pea & Mint Soup with Lemon Cream		200	110	7	17	12	7	3.5	0.5	35	240	5	
Pea & Shrimp Penne with Basil		660	180	43	74	20	3	13	3	250	880	7	
Quick-Braised Peas, Lettuce & Scallions		140	70	6	14	8	4.5	2	0	20	210	5	
Spaghetti alla Carbonara	56												
Spaghetti alla Carbonara		810	310	34	89	34	10	15	4.5	255	1530	6	
Garlic	58												
Braised Chicken with 40 Cloves of Garlic		590	300	55	12	33	8	15	6	165	740	1	without baguette
Creamy Garlic Mashed Potatoes		300	130	5	39	15	9	4	0.5	40	300	3	
Spaghetti with Garlic & Spinach		740	280	21	94	32	6	20	3.5	5	660	8	
Garlicky Shrimp with Basil		240	170	14	1	19	2.5	13	2	125	290	0	
Garlic-Rosemary Butter		110	100	0	1	12	7	3	0	30	140	0	based on 1 Tbs.
Roasted Garlic		25	10	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	based on 1 Tbs.
Baklava	63												
Classic Baklava		250	140	4	26	15	6	6	2.5	20	75	2	
Apricot & Pistachio Baklava with Orange Syrup		260	120	4	32	14	6	5	2	20	75	2	
Hazelnut & Chocolate Baklava with Espresso Syrup		280	170	4	26	19	7	10	1.5	20	75	2	
Pizza Dough	66												
Classic Margherita Pizza		670	180	28	94	20	8	8	2	45	1400	4	
White Pizza (Pizza Bianca)		870	360	32	92	41	16	19	3.5	75	1380	3	
Better Than Pepperoni Pizza		810	280	34	95	31	13	13	2.5	80	1910	5	
Sausage & Pepper Calzone		820	280	37	98	31	13	12	3	70	1880	5	
Stromboli with Salami, Ham & Cheese		410	140	20	46	16	6	7	1.5	50	1150	2	without sauce
No-Cook Tomato Sauce		20	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	170	1	based on ¼ cup
Test Kitchen	72												
Saffron Tomato Sauce with Capers		80	45	1	7	5	0.5	3.5	0.5	0	350	2	based on ¼ cup
Quick & Delicious	90a												
Sautéed Chicken with Sherry & Olive Pan Sauce		320	130	37	5	15	2.5	9	2.5	95	640	2	
Village-Style Greek Salad with Chicken		690	440	48	13	49	17	25	4.5	170	1740	2	
Sautéed Chicken Paillards with Herb Salad		320	150	37	6	17	3	10	2.5	95	470	3	
Sesame Noodles with Chicken		770	300	42	75	34	6	14	11	65	1560	6	
Chicken Fajitas with Red Pepper, Onions & Lime		650	270	47	48	30	9	12	7	140	620	7	
Spicy Chicken Tenders with Blue Cheese Dipping Sauce		710	460	43	18	51	14	5	1.5	140	1190	1	
Vietnamese-Style Caramel-Braised Chicken		310	120	32	15	13	3.5	5	3	110	1490	0	
Back Cover													
Seared Scallops with Pea Purée, Pancetta & Gremolata		290	180	13	15	20	5	11	2	30	630	4	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used. Optional

ingredients with measured amounts are included; ingredients without specific quantities are not. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantities of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.



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LINGUINE

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The smell of simmering garlic permeated the air as we wandered the winding streets and terracotta buildings of Vernazza. A fork in the road led us to the kitchen door of a small restaurant where I caught a glimpse of the chef at work. Between the cutting boards and ingredients, I noticed the familiar blue box of Barilla pasta.

Barilla Linguine with pesto and green beans

Ingredients

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Barilla Linguine | 1 box |
| Potatoes | 2 cups, diced |
| Fresh green beans | 1/4 pound |
| Fresh basil | 1 cup |
| Extra virgin olive oil | 6 tbsp |
| Pine nuts | 2 tbsp |
| Garlic | 1 clove |
| Pecorino cheese | 1 tbsp, grated |
| Parmesan cheese | 2 tbsp, grated |
| Salt & black pepper | to taste |



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Simple Scallops for a Special Weeknight Meal

This recipe may look fussy, but it's actually feasible for a weeknight. The luscious sweet pea purée comes together quickly, and the pancetta bakes while you sear the scallops. Easy and elegant, this dish is great for guests or for a special family meal.

Seared Scallops with Pea Purée, Crisp Pancetta & Gremolata

*Serves four as an appetizer,
two as a main course.*

½ cup finely chopped shallots
**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; more
for drizzling**
1 tsp. minced garlic
**2 cups fresh shelled peas (about 2 lb.
unshelled) or frozen peas**
1 cup lower-salt chicken broth or water
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black
pepper**
8 very thin slices pancetta
⅓ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
12 medium all-natural “dry” sea scallops
1 Tbs. unsalted butter

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F.

Set aside 1 Tbs. of the shallots and put the rest in a 3-quart saucepan with 2 Tbs. of the oil and the garlic. Cook over medium-low heat until the shallots are soft and fragrant but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add the peas and the broth and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and then reduce the heat to medium low. Cover the pan and cook until the peas are tender, 5 to 8 minutes for fresh peas, 3 to 4 minutes for frozen.

Transfer the contents of the pan to a blender and purée to a smooth consistency, adding a little water if needed. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Return the purée to the saucepan, cover, and set aside on the stovetop to keep warm.

Put the pancetta on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown and crisp, 10 to 14 minutes. Set aside in a warm spot.

In a small bowl combine the parsley, lemon zest, and the reserved 1 Tbs. shallots and set aside.

Pat the scallops dry and season them generously with salt and pepper. Heat the butter and the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until very hot. Add the scallops and cook, flipping once, until golden brown on both sides and almost firm to the touch, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

Portion the warm pea purée among four large salad plates or between two dinner plates. Arrange the scallops on the purée and crumble the pancetta on top. Sprinkle the gremolata over all and finish with a generous drizzle of olive oil.

*Recipe by Annie Wayte, author of
Keep it Seasonal: Soups, Salads,
and Sandwiches. ♦*



Look for “dry” scallops

All-natural, “dry” sea scallops will sear better because they have not been soaked in STP (sodium tripolyphosphate), which causes them to retain water and gives them a longer shelf life. Untreated scallops will be fresher and will taste better, too.

More recipes for
peas begin on p. 50.

Not your ordinary chicken dinner

BY ADAM RIED

When it comes to a quick, flavorful dinner, I'm a fan of boneless, skinless chicken cuts, which are not only speedier to cook than their bone-in counterparts but also well suited to many cooking methods. While chicken breasts are fine—and always popular—there are a few other cuts from the poultry aisle that I think are worth buying.

For example, ever wonder what to do with those thin chicken “cutlets” you see at the store? I like to cook them simply and serve them with a delicate fresh herb salad. But they're also great in a savory chicken sauté, like the one here that's made with sherry, olives, and almonds.

What about boneless, skinless chicken thighs? The rich dark meat stands up well to intense flavors, so I braise it in a savory Vietnamese caramel sauce or use it in boldly flavored fajitas with cumin, red pepper, and lime.

And finally, if you don't usually cook with chicken tenders, you might be surprised at how versatile they are. Here, you'll find them three ways: in a Greek-style salad, with spicy sesame noodles, and in a twist on Buffalo wings that cooks in less time than it takes to heat the broiler.



Sesame Noodles with Chicken

Serves six.

Kosher salt

1 lb. dried plain or whole-grain spaghetti

6 Tbs. Asian sesame oil

4 medium cloves garlic, peeled

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup creamy peanut butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup less-sodium ginger-flavored soy sauce

6 Tbs. rice vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup light or dark brown sugar

$1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. chicken tenders

2 tsp. peanut oil

Freshly ground black pepper

6 scallions, thinly sliced on the diagonal

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the spaghetti and cook according to package directions until the pasta is al dente. Drain in a colander and rinse under cold running water until cool. Transfer the pasta to a large bowl, and toss with 1 Tbs. of the sesame oil.

In a food processor, pulse the garlic until roughly chopped. Add the remaining 5 Tbs. sesame oil, and the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar, brown sugar, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Process until smooth, stopping as necessary to scrape down the bowl, about 30 seconds. Set aside.

Trim off any exposed tendon ends from the wide tips of the tenders, if necessary. Season the tenders with $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. salt and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper. Heat the peanut oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Cook the tenders until well browned on both sides and just cooked through, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and slice crosswise into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces. Add the chicken to the spaghetti along with half of the scallions.

Pour about $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups of the dressing over the pasta and chicken and toss to coat. Add more dressing to taste—you may not need to use it all. Transfer to a serving platter, sprinkle with the remaining scallions, and serve.

Note: The rich dressing may appear thin, but the noodles and chicken will soak it up. For more color and flavor, add some thinly sliced red pepper or grated carrots.



Chicken Fajitas with Red Pepper, Onion & Lime

Serves four.

1½ tsp. chili powder
1¼ tsp. ground cumin
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 to 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (1½ to 2 lb.), trimmed of excess fat
2 Tbs. canola, vegetable, or corn oil
1 very large or 2 medium yellow onions, quartered and thinly sliced crosswise (about 4 cups)
1 large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into strips about ¼ inch wide and 2 inches long
3 medium cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
Twelve 5- to 6-inch corn tortillas
1½ cups crumbled queso fresco or grated Monterey Jack cheese

Mix 1 tsp. of the chili powder, ½ tsp. of the cumin, ¾ tsp. salt, and ½ tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Season the chicken on both sides with the spice rub. Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Cook the chicken without disturbing, except to flip, until both sides are browned and the chicken is firm to the touch, 3 to 4 minutes per side. If it browns too quickly,

reduce the heat to medium. Transfer the thighs to a cutting board and let them cool slightly.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, and ½ tsp. each salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, just until the vegetables begin to soften, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic and the remaining ¾ tsp. cumin and ½ tsp. chili powder and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the lime juice. Transfer to a bowl, cover loosely with foil, and keep warm.

Cut the thighs on the diagonal into thin slices, transfer to a plate, cover, and keep warm.

Heat the tortillas according to package directions. Fill each one with a few slices of the chicken and some of the onion mixture and cheese. Fold the filled tortillas and serve.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with hot sauce, guacamole, or sour cream, or a combination.



Sautéed Chicken Paillards with Herb Salad & White Balsamic Vinaigrette

Serves four.

1 Tbs. white balsamic vinegar
1½ tsp. white-wine or cider vinegar
One-half small shallot, finely chopped
¼ tsp. Dijon mustard
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. plus 2 tsp. olive oil; more as needed
8 boneless, skinless, thin-cut (¼- to ½-inch-thick) chicken breast cutlets (1½ to 1¾ lb.)
5 cups mixed baby greens
3 cups mixed fresh, tender herb leaves, such as flat-leaf parsley, mint, chives, tarragon, basil, and chervil, roughly torn if large

In a small bowl, mix both vinegars with the shallot, mustard, and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in 3 Tbs. of the oil.

Season the chicken on both sides with 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Heat the remaining 2 tsp. oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Working

in two to three batches to avoid crowding, cook the chicken until lightly browned on both sides and just cooked through, 1 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer each batch to a platter, cover loosely with foil, and keep warm. If the pan seems dry at any point, add 2 more tsp. of oil.

Combine the greens and herbs in a large bowl. Add about three-quarters of the vinaigrette and toss well. To serve, arrange two cutlets on each serving plate and drizzle the remaining dressing over the chicken. Divide the herb salad among the four plates, piling it attractively onto the chicken.

Note: In this vinaigrette, the oil should serve as a backdrop to the vinegar and not a strong flavor in and of itself. That's why I use fairly neutral olive oil rather than more distinctive extra-virgin oil.



Vietnamese-Style Caramel-Braised Chicken

Serves four.

¼ cup fish sauce
2 large shallots, finely chopped
2 medium cloves garlic, minced
⅛ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup granulated sugar
6 to 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (1½ to 2 lb.), trimmed of excess fat and cut into ¾-inch-wide strips
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

In a small bowl, mix the fish sauce and ¼ cup water. In another small bowl, mix the shallots, garlic, red pepper flakes, and ½ tsp. black pepper.

Put the sugar and 2 Tbs. water in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium heat and cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the sugar dissolves. Let the melted sugar come to a boil and cook, swirling the pan occasionally at first and more frequently as the sugar browns, until it has caramelized to a deep amber color, 5 to 8 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and, standing back to

avoid spatters, slowly add the fish sauce mixture to the pan. Swirl the pan to combine, return to medium heat, and bring to a boil. Add the shallot mixture and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the shallots soften, 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the chicken pieces to the pan in a single layer, reduce the heat to medium low or low, cover, and cook at a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally, until the chicken is cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes. Serve sprinkled with the cilantro.

Tip: Use a heavy-duty pan with a light-color surface, which will make it easy to monitor the color of the caramel as it darkens. Nonstick or other pans with dark finishes make it difficult to see what's going on.

Serving suggestion: Jasmine rice and stir-fried cabbage or baby bok choy make great accompaniments.



Village-Style Greek Salad with Chicken & Lemon-Mint Vinaigrette

Serves four.

One-half medium red onion, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
1½ lb. chicken tenders
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
⅓ cup plus 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
⅓ cup chopped fresh mint
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 medium clove garlic, minced
½ tsp. finely grated lemon zest
12 oz. feta, cut into ½-inch cubes (2¾ cups)
2 cups cherry tomatoes, washed and halved
1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into ½-inch chunks
¾ cup pitted Kalamata olives, halved

Put the sliced onion in a small bowl and add enough cold water to cover.

Trim off any exposed tendon ends from the wide tips of the tenders, if necessary. Season the tenders with ¾ tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Heat 2 tsp. of the oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Cook the tenders until well browned on both sides and just cooked through, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a cut-

ting board and let rest while you make the dressing.

In a large bowl, combine the mint, lemon juice, garlic, lemon zest, and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in the remaining ⅓ cup oil. Set aside 2 Tbs. of the vinaigrette in a small bowl.

Drain the onions and press them gently to remove any excess water. Add the onions to the large bowl of vinaigrette, along with the feta, tomatoes, cucumber, and olives. Slice the chicken crosswise into ½-inch pieces and add it to the salad. Toss everything to coat. Divide the salad among four serving plates, drizzle with the reserved vinaigrette, and serve immediately.

Note: "Village-style" salads, called *horiatiki* in Greece, usually omit the lettuce and leave the other ingredients in rough chunks. Serve with warmed pita.



Sautéed Chicken with Sherry & Olive Pan Sauce & Toasted Almonds

Serves four.

8 boneless, skinless, thin-cut (¼- to ½-inch-thick) chicken breast cutlets (1½ to 1¾ lb.)
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
4 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
1 medium clove garlic, minced
½ cup sherry, preferably medium dry, such as amontillado
½ cup lower-salt chicken broth
½ cup green olives, pitted and slivered
3 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
¼ cup slivered almonds, toasted lightly and cooled

Season the chicken on both sides with about 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Heat 2 tsp. of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Working in two or three batches to avoid crowding, cook the chicken until lightly browned on both sides and just cooked through, 1 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer each batch of chicken to a platter, cover loosely

with foil, and keep warm. If the pan seems dry at any point, add 2 more tsp. of oil.

Reduce the heat to medium, add 2 tsp. oil, and then the onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion softens, about 3 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the sherry and chicken broth, increase the heat to medium high, and cook until the sauce thickens slightly, about 3 minutes. Stir in the olives and cook until heated through, about 1 minute. Stir in the parsley, season to taste with salt and pepper, and spoon the mixture over the chicken. Sprinkle with the almonds and serve.

Tip: Use a toaster oven to toast the almonds; the heat is concentrated in a small area, so the nuts toast quickly and evenly.

Serving suggestion: Serve with wilted greens with garlic and lemon, plus grilled bread brushed with extra-virgin olive oil and rubbed with fresh garlic.



Crisp & Spicy Chicken Tenders with Blue Cheese Dipping Sauce

Serves four.

2½ cups panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1½ lb. chicken tenders
¾ cup mayonnaise
1 Tbs. hot pepper sauce (I like Frank's Red Hot)
¼ tsp. cayenne
¾ cup crumbled blue cheese (about 4 oz.)
½ cup sour cream
3 Tbs. milk

Pour the panko into a shallow dish (like a pie pan) and toss with ¾ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper.

Trim off any exposed tendon ends from the wide tips of the chicken tenders, if necessary. In a medium bowl, whisk ¼ cup of the mayonnaise with the hot sauce, cayenne, and ⅓ tsp. salt. Add the chicken and toss with your hands to coat well. Coat each tender in the panko and arrange in a single layer on a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet. Refrigerate while you heat the broiler and make the sauce.

Position an oven rack 6 inches from the broiler element and heat the broiler on high for at least 10 minutes. Meanwhile, combine the remaining ½ cup mayonnaise with the blue cheese, sour cream, milk, ½ tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper in a medium bowl. Whisk until well combined and only small bits of cheese remain intact.

Broil the tenders, flipping once, until they are crisp and golden brown in spots on the outside and cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes per side (rotate the pan as needed for even browning). Transfer the tenders to a platter or to individual plates and serve with the dipping sauce.

Serving suggestion: As with Buffalo wings, fresh carrot and celery sticks are perfect here.